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United Opposition, Wednesday Group talks hit snag

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New year's shocker: San Miguel kills orchestra, chorale

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Priests are human, too, bloopers show

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE ROSH OF MOTHERS

Rock icon pays tribute to Imelda minus shoes

NEW YORK—INDEPENDENT ROCK ICON DAVID

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, February 5, 2007 ▪ Vol. 22 / No. 59 ▪ website: www.inquirer.net

MNLF releases general

2-night drama ends as government agrees to tripartite meeting

By Fe Zamora and Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

JOLO, SULU—THEY were detained for two nights in a camp surrounded by more than 1,000 armed men. But when they were finally allowed to leave, their hosts even butchered a cow for their going-away lunch.

Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino, Undersecretary for the Peace Process Bantay Ceasefire and about 10 companions stepped out of the camp of the Moro National Liberation Front yesterday afternoon, ending a drama that lasted for some 50 hours and ended with the MNLF receiving cash, food and much-needed publicity.

Dolorfino, in a white shirt, was hugged by Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Jesus Dureza at Camp Teodoro Bautista where a helicopter had brought the general and his companions after their release from the MNLF camp in Panamao on Jolo island.

"We are happy that the crisis is over," Dolorfino said, smiling broadly.

Santos, a former general himself who was almost not allowed to leave the MNLF camp, according to an Inquirer informant, wore a black jacket and a worried expression on his face.

One of those to the detained group said the MNLF had initially wanted to hold on to Santos for "leverage" with the government.

Santos denied this and suggested that the absence of media during a ceremony inside the guerrilla camp might have caused the delay in their release.

"The media were not there so we had to wait," Santos told the hostess.

An Inquirer informant privy to the negotiations said MNLF Commander Habier Malik had insisted on the presence of media during the turnover to the government side of firearms captured by the MNLF in previous encounters.

"No media, no release," was a condition which the source said Malik had made before releasing Dolorfino's group.

MNLF, A20

MARINE Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino (in white shirt) is welcomed by Jesus Dureza, presidential adviser on the peace process, upon arrival at Camp Bautista in Bustos, Jolo, after spending two nights at the Moro National Liberation Front's camp in Panamao, Sulu. AFP PHOTO

Gov't may allow Nur's provisional release

By DJ Yap and Christine O. Avendaño

THE GOVERNMENT IS OPEN to the possibility of releasing Muslim leader Nur Misuari on his own recognizance so he could represent the Moro National Liberation Front in tripartite talks in Saudi Arabia, an interior department official said yesterday.

To be released on one's own recognizance means a jailed person is freed without bail to the custody of someone of high moral standing in the community.

The matter of who will have charge of Misuari, should he be freed, is still up for discussion, Assistant Secretary Brian Sarmiento said yesterday.

He said Misuari's provisional release would be discussed next week by the government peace panel and the Moro rebels.

"It all depends on the results of negotiations between the peace panel and the MNLF next week," Sarmiento said.

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita appointed yesterday to take a hardline stance on the idea of Misuari's release, citing two reasons why this would be impossible.

"Number One, Misuari is facing a serious criminal charge and is detained. And Number Two, Sarmiento said.

GOV'T MAY ALLOW, A22

RP maids rally anew in HK over guidelines

By Blanche S. Rivera
Correspondent

HONG KONG—FOR THE SECond straight Sunday, all roads taken by Filipino maids on their free day off led to Admiralty's Statue Garden in front of the Philippine Consulate.

Unappeased by the recent government decision relaxing the new deployment rules for Filipino maids, thousands of domestic helpers again filled Hong Kong's streets to mark the scrapping of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration's (POEA) guidelines and the resignation of the Philippines' top labor officials.

About a thousand members of the Jesus is Lord (JIL) Church, the biggest Philippine evangelical Christian group in Hong Kong, turned up at yesterday's protest as part of Bangun Filipinas' delegation.

At least 13 other church groups and Catholic parishes here joined the campaign.

"Ang mga taong simbahan, kasali lang nanonalangin, kumbaba din (Church people do not only pray, they also act)," JIL pastor Edgar Roldan said a crowd of some 3,000 Filipinos at Statue Garden.

Organizers said about the

RP MAIDS, A12

UN-sponsored report smoking gun on global warming

By Amando Doronila
(First of two parts)

THE LIGHTS AT THE EIFFEL Tower in Paris went off for five minutes on Thursday evening as the world awaited the release of the United Nations-sponsored report providing the "smoking gun" on the threat of global warming to life on earth.

Parisians switched off their lights to raise awareness about energy efficiency and fossil-fuel pollution, which is blamed for climate change. The blackout spread to hotels near the tower, where the world's leading climate scientists were fine-tuning their report, forcing them to burn the midnight oil.

When the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued the report at the gray Unesco headquarters in Paris on Friday evening, it shocked the world with an apocalyptic vision of a looming ecological disaster unless steps were taken to check emissions of greenhouse gases linked to global warming.

ANALYSIS

The report warned of melting ice sheets, rising sea levels, heat waves, worsening droughts, heavy rainfall in some regions, and stronger hurricanes and storms in tropical countries, presumably including the Philippines in the decades to come.

These are the consequences of global warming due to the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. Instead of radiating the heat from the sun back to space, the greenhouse gases trap it.

In the most powerful language yet used by scientists in their assessment of the future of the planet, the report concluded for the first time that the global evidence of climate change caused by fossil fuel (mainly oil and coal) emissions was "unequivocal."

UN-SPONSORED, A7

A YEAR AFTER Survivors and victims of the Wowowee stampede hear Mass outside the gates of the PhilSports Arena (formerly Ultra) during a vigil to commemorate the first anniversary of the tragedy that killed 71 people and injured hundreds of others. (Story in Metro, Page A24.) MARTIN SAN DIEGO

Pacquiao-Morales rematch over beer

By Jasmine W. Paya and Francis Ochoa

THERE WERE TENSE MOMENTS.

And it wasn't the staged tension, where Erik "El Terrible" Morales crashes a beer joint to the strains of a Mexican ditty, approaches a table where Manny Pacquiao and trainer Freddie Roach are seated and engages the Filipino ring icon in a staring match.

During the making of the San Miguel Corp. commercial that is not only sure to spawn spoofs—proof of its potential blockbuster caliber—but also sure to go down in advertising lore as a major coup, there was still leftover tension from a bitter rivalry.

"You could feel [that they were uncomfortable with each other]," said a San Miguel insider, who revealed to the Inquirer what happened behind the scenes as condition of anonymity.

The first scene that was shot was the most tense, said the official revealed. But when "they needed to sit right next to each other, you [could] tell by the body language [that they were uncomfortable]. Erik was leaning [to] the left, Manny was leaning [to] the right."

It did not help that Roach, the American trainer who spurred

PACQUIAO-MORALES, A13

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

UNO-Wednesday Group talks hit snag

By TJ Burgonio

WITH ONLY A WEEK TO GO BEFORE THE DEADLINE for the filing of candidacies for the May polls, fresh kinks have emerged in talks between the United Opposition (UNO) and the incumbent senators' "Wednesday Group" for a unified senatorial slate.

It now appears that the Wednesday Group of Senate President Manuel Villar Jr., Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, and Senators Ralph Recto and Loi-

ez Arroyo is unhappy with the way the UNO group of deposed President Joseph Estrada has been treating them.

Villar heads the Nacionalista Party and Recto is a party mate. Pangilinan is the national chair of Erdito's Liberal Party ruling, while Arroyo has no party.

"UNO should set aside (for) us go under their wing and join them with a take it or leave it stance," said Pangilinan in a text response to the question of what was keeping their group from finally forging the coalition with UNO.

"To do us, I believe, is not the way to unity. Negotiation rather than dictation is the better-mannered action," he said.

Pangilinan added that if the talks failed, their group was open to the idea of "going it alone."

It was the first time that Pangilinan openly admitted "differences" with UNO.

Sen. Villar and Recto have been pushing for an opposition slate with incumbent senators forming the core, a position that apparently put them at odds with UNO.

UNO leaders earlier met to enact last night to thrash out the matter at the home of Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, president of PDP-Laban, which forms part of UNO together with Estrada's Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino (PMP), according to Sen. Pimentel.

UNO leaders announced last Wednesday their initial list of eight candidates that will slate for Villar, Pangilinan, Recto and Arroyo.

The list was not but was available to reach UNO spokesperson Rufus Rodriguez for comment.

Officials in the camp of ousted President Joseph Estrada, however, were quick to say the remaining slots were reserved for the four.

Ultimatum

The "premature announcement" forced the LDP to cancel their formal announcement of their candidates at the Senate. That same day, UNO issued its ultimatum to the Wednesday Group to make up its mind, according to sources.

Those initially drafted by UNO were Lacson, former Senators Loren Legarda and Juhn Ostmeña, Representatives Francis Escudero, Alan Peter Cayetano of NP, and Benigno Aquino III of LP. Sen. Juan Ponce Jr. Enrile and lawyer Aquilino Pimentel III.

"Apparently, this is just a matter of pride," Lacson had said on cloth, theorizing that the Wednesday Group was least because they did not form the front-line of the coalition slate, and that's why they now had reservations about joining the UNO-led coalition.

"I've heard this from them that (the ones should) come from incumbent senators. I think that's a little petty. What's important is that we're able to form a 12-man slate, instead of thinking of who should take the lead. That can be set aside," he said.

Work together

Pangilinan said their group "need not join them (UNO) to be able to work with them to squarely address real issues facing the nation," pointing out that senators from different political affiliations had managed to work together to craft legislation and stop repressive administration policies.

"We have shown that we cannot be dictated upon by Malacañang or other interest groups. Why then should we allow ourselves to be dictated upon now?" he said.

The senator said they welcomed any chance to reunite with other stakeholders and groups, but this should be based on "mutual respect" and a "common vision" of ensuring that the Senate remain as "an independent and vigilant institution committed to the rule of law."

Pangilinan said they were keeping their options open since the talks with UNO were still in flux, and would decide whether to go it alone at the "proper time."

Escudero tells youth: Country needs you now

SAGUIO CITY—COURTING THE SUPPORT of the youth, Sorsogon Rep. Francis "Chiz" Escudero spoke at a student forum here and urged the youth to take a more active role in shaping the future of the nation.

"Halimaw na ang sitado ni Rizal na ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan. Ang dapat nating sipsip at bagong pamamaraan ng kabataan ay hindi na dito ng bayan—oh, ngayon at dito (Let us forget Rizal's words that the youth is the hope of the motherland. The youth's new soul should be 'My country can depend on me—here and now)," Escudero told some 100 students and members of militant groups at the forum on Saturday at the University of Baguio.

He also discussed the plans and prospects of the political opposition in the 2007 elections.

"Part of being young is wanting to change things even when others tell you to accept things as they are, and believing that even though setbacks or pessimists had failed, our generation is different, our generation can do it," said Escudero, a member of the Senate's opposition.

He said the youth should not waste their right to vote as it is only during elections that all Filipinos become equal and are given the opportunity to chart the country's future.

He said the youth must be recognized as active partners in the transformation of the country.

Escudero also stressed that Filipinos need less of vi-change and learn how to follow laws.

"The orientation and views of Filipinos must change," he said, noting that change must begin with the top leaders of the country.

He said the solutions to the nation's problems were already the country's body of laws.

"There is a law for everything that is published. The law just needs to be implemented and followed," Escudero said. —Dona Dezmelle with reports from Sweden Bagwalbal, Inquirer Northern Luzon

De-kalidad at abot-kayang gamot, ngayon na!

HOUSE BILL NO. 6035, IPASA!

Panahon na upang gumnawa mula sa salot na hindi maganot dahil sa presyong hindi maabot

This is the clamor of our people. This is the consensus of our legislators * who support H. B. 6035, the proposed measure that will help bring down the sky-high prices of medicines.

And this is the goal of H. E. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo who, on 22 January 2007, certified to the necessity of the immediate enactment of House Bill No. 6035 "to address public emergency arising from the urgent need to amend certain provisions of the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines in order to protect public health by creating an environment that will lower the prices of, as well as ensure open and adequate access to, drugs and medicines particularly by the poor and underprivileged who can hardly afford to purchase patented drugs and medicines because of exorbitant and prohibitive prices."

THE KEY IS COMPETITION

Market competition is the key toward achieving the common agenda of lower medicine prices.

House Bill No. 6035 aims to open the Philippine drug market to greater competition, provide greater support to Filipino generic drug companies, and rationalize and update our intellectual property laws to conform to world standards and best practices, as recognized by the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization. It aims to strengthen government-use provisions to enable the State to respond quickly and decisively to public health crises and challenges.

Its purpose is to help realize the dream of every sick Filipino to get well by making quality medicines accessible and affordable.

THE HOUSE MUST ACT NOW

Starting today, only three session days are left before the 13th Congress adjourns for the May 14, 2007 elections. That's three more days for our honorable Congressmen to approve House Bill No. 6035 and write history as proponents of the Filipinos' health.

"Aanhin pa ang damo, kung patay na ang kabayo?"

We can't afford to wait any longer. We must not delay or postpone any more a potent remedy to a malignant illness. We appeal to our lawmakers' sense of public good, and ask that they exercise political will to pass House Bill 6035 NOW!

* Hon. Representatives Junie Cua, Ana Theresia "Risa" Hontiveros-Baraquel, Arthur "Dadoy" Y. Pingoy, Jr., M. D., Roseller L. Barinaga, Salvacion M. Castillo, Darlene R. Antonino-Custodio, Ma. Milagros "Milet" N. Magsaysay, and Rodina "Neneng" G. Rosales, Edcel C. Lagman, Rodolfo C. Biazon, Felix R. Alfelor, Jr., Rey B. Aquino, M.D., Ferjenel G. Biron, M.D., Damian Q. Bunsay, Teodoro A. Casiño, Del R. De Guzman, Jeanette L. Garin, M.D., Rodia S. Gonzalez, Eduardo R. Gullas, Gregorio T. Ipong, Herminiano I. Mandanas, Roger G. Mercado, Abraham Kahlil B. Mitra, Pedro M. Pancho, Prospero A. Pichay, Jr., Rhodora L. Sanchez-Laredo, Mary Ann L. Susano, Ismael M. Tomawis, Luis H. Villafuerte, & Nereda "Ria Nena" R. Magbalo. Jesus Crispin Remulla

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Disaster-prone RP heeding UN warning–GMA

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO IS taking seriously the warning raised by a United Nations panel on climate change since the Philippines has experienced for itself the destructive effects of the skewed weather patterns caused by global warming.

"The Philippines views with deep concern the UN report on global warming and part of our long-term development agenda is the reforestation of uplands, drastic emissions. "We Armys said it a statement. "We shall march with the world in the struggle against global warming."

The UN's intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that the greenhouse effect caused by pollution from the use of fossil fuels would disrupt the global climate system for the next 1,000 years. The UN is currently weighing whether to call a meeting on global warming considering that the Kyoto Protocol, which sets international targets for pollution controls, will expire in 2012.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said the rising global awareness on the destructive effects of global warming should prompt the United States to sign the Kyoto Protocol and 'lead the world in curbing down on pollution.

The President noted that the "Philippines itself is becoming victim to destructive storms and floods as well as sharp changes in climate, taking a heavy toll on lives, crops and property."

She has ordered her Cabinet to "constantly keep an eye on the caveats of the UN on global warming in all our development programs." GIFC. Gabaconguan Jr.

Attention: All SSS Members

NEW SSS CONTRIBUTION SCHEDULE

Starting January 1, 2007

RANGE OF COMPENSATION	MONTHLY SALARY CREDIT*	EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE						EC / MPF/ OFW
		SOCIAL SECURITY			EC	TOTAL CONTRIBUTION		TOTAL CONTRIBUTION
		ER	EE	Total	ER	ER	EE	Total
1,000 – 1,249.99	1,000	70.70	33.30	104	10	80.70	33.30	114
1,250 – 1,749.99	1,500	106.05	49.95	156	10	116.05	49.95	166
1,750 – 2,249.99	2,000	141.40	66.60	208	10	151.40	66.60	218
2,250 – 2,749.99	2,500	176.75	83.25	260	10	186.75	83.25	270
2,750 – 3,249.99	3,000	212.10	99.90	312	10	222.10	99.90	332
3,250 – 3,749.99	3,500	247.50	116.70	364	10	257.50	116.70	374
3,750 – 4,249.99	4,000	282.80	133.20	416	10	292.80	133.20	426
4,250 – 4,749.99	4,500	318.20	149.80	468	10	328.20	149.80	478
4,750 – 5,249.99	5,000	353.50	166.50	520	10	363.50	166.50	530
5,250 – 5,749.99	5,500	388.90	183.10	572	10	398.90	183.10	582
5,750 – 6,249.99	6,000	424.20	200.00	624	10	434.20	200.00	634
6,250 – 6,749.99	6,500	459.60	216.70	676	10	469.60	216.70	686
6,750 – 7,249.99	7,000	494.90	233.30	728	10	504.90	233.30	738
7,250 – 7,749.99	7,500	530.00	250.00	780	10	540.00	250.00	790
7,750 – 8,249.99	8,000	565.30	266.70	832	10	575.30	266.70	842
8,250 – 8,749.99	8,500	600.70	283.30	884	10	610.70	283.30	894
8,750 – 9,249.99	9,000	636.00	300.00	936	10	646.00	300.00	946
9,250 – 9,749.99	9,500	671.30	316.70	988	10	681.30	316.70	998
9,750 – 10,249.99	10,000	706.70	333.30	1,040	10	716.70	333.30	1,050
10,250 – 10,749.99	10,500	742.00	350.00	1,092	10	752.00	350.00	1,102
10,750 – 11,249.99	11,000	777.30	366.70	1,144	10	787.30	366.70	1,154
11,250 – 11,749.99	11,500	812.70	383.30	1,196	10	822.70	383.30	1,206
11,750 – 12,249.99	12,000	848.00	400.00	1,248	10	858.00	400.00	1,258
12,250 – 12,749.99	12,500	883.30	416.70	1,300	10	893.30	416.70	1,310
12,750 – 13,249.99	13,000	918.70	433.30	1,352	10	928.70	433.30	1,362
13,250 – 13,749.99	13,500	954.00	450.00	1,404	10	964.00	450.00	1,414
13,750 – 14,249.99	14,000	989.30	466.70	1,456	10	999.30	466.70	1,466
14,250 – 14,749.99	14,500	1,024.70	483.30	1,508	10	1,034.70	483.30	1,518
14,750 – over	15,000	1,060.00	500.00	1,560	10	1,070.00	500.00	1,570

*The minimum monthly salary credit for OFW members is ₱5,000

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Cayetano still won't buy German bank's statement

By Michael Lim Ubac

"UNLESS AND INCONCLUSIVE" was how House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano described the new certification issued by Hypothekenbank in Germany which claims that not one member of the Fleet family had accounts or made transactions with the bank during the 18 years.

Cayetano said there's "nothing new with the certification, as reported and as usual, it's for show and propaganda, harmful or nothing."

The opposition lawmaker from Taguig-Pateros noted that even the letter signed by Fleet Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo is likewise allowing bank officials to divulge its bank accounts to the public "opposite to a limited extent."

"This is useless, the limited waiver doesn't include accounts in names of husband, in fictitious names or in names of corporations," he said, adding: "It's not the Filipino people's big apology."

Lagumbay is set to present his evidence that the Fleet Family had received millions of dollars in kickbacks and other parts of the world during a hearing tomorrow.

"It's time for Cayetano to come clean," said Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas, shortly after hearing that Representatives Roberto Cajes, Rudolph Mantos and Antonio Cortes, along with lawyers and the latter's two lawyers, had obtained the bank certification.

Cagas, a member of the ethics committee, said Cayetano, with his latest antiantics, was only "digging a deeper hole for himself" by calling the ethics committee members defenders and protectors of the Fleet Family.

He said it was not just unfair for Cayetano to hit the committee members, but also place dishonor on his part to refuse to admit his mistake.

"It's not a joke to be branding us a liar, plant like Germany and probe the bank accounts issue. He should even ask for pardon not just from the Arroyos, but also from his colleagues for hurling the accusation on a wild goose chase," Cagas said.

A copy of the new bank certification was faxed to the Inquirer. Dated Feb. 2, it bore the signatures of Hypothekenbank officer-in-charge Michael Ohnesorge, general secretary head Dr Volkmann, and compliance officer Klaus Michael Rhein.

The certification stated: "Further to those various Gentleman's letters faxed to the Bank's records investigation post into 1,111 years from the date of the letter, we confirm that during this ten-year period Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Jose Miguel T. Arroyo, Ignacio T. Arroyo, Juan Miguel Macapagal Arroyo, Dionisio Macapagal Arroyo and Evangelina Macapagal Arroyo have never had any account, placement, investment or connection with the Bank, or any of its branches worldwide, in their names, singly, or in any combination or representation."

The bank officials, who met with Arroyo and the fact finding team on Feb. 2, confirmed the certification the bank had issued to the Fleet Gentleman on August 31, September 2006 showing that the Arroyo family did not have any bank accounts there.

The bank also allowed its asset inspectors and consultants to international money laundering experts.

Correction

IN THE FEB. 4 ISSUE, the banner story—"General: Info[illegible]"—referred to the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) as involved in the circumcision of the government peace team in Jolo. Those involved were members of the Moro National Liberation Front, as stated in the second paragraph of the story. The Mindanao rido also erroneously referred to a MILF clash. Mindanao is more of the MNLF.

Reader may send their requests for correction of factual errors involving articles in the Star Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Ortigas Ave., Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines 1550; fax no. 896-6040; e-mail address: stardesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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March 6 - 8, 2007
Mandarin Oriental Hotel

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March 6 - 8, 2007
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- Use negotiations as a reason by which to develop lasting relationships with your counterpart
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DEBT COLLECTION BY TELEPHONE
March 6 - 8, 2007
Mandarin Oriental Hotel

Debt collection should not put you at odds with your customers. While all the excuses and stalling could get frustrating, you can overcome them with the right skills. Handle even the most complex transaction and see subject to **basic customer service principles**. Learn to plan your calls for **knowing whom to talk to** and **preparing for potential barriers. Persuade them** to settle their accounts quickly with Debt Collection by Telephone skills will:

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- Anticipate and deal with potential barriers and objections to the collection
- Discover some creative, more innovative ways of collecting your receivables
- Use your voice and words as tools to persuade customers to pay NOW!
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Governors hit snub on app'ts of police chiefs

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE LEAGUE OF PROVINCES of the Philippines (LPP) has complained to President Macapagal-Arroyo that provincial police directors had been appointed without the approval of the governors in their respective provinces.

Behold Gov. Exies Zamorano, president of the 79-member LPP, and 14 governors complained during the LPP meeting last Friday that they had not been consulted in the appointments of new provincial police directors.

Some of the 14 provinces are Camarines Sur, Batangas, Southern Leyte, Masbate, Aklan and Cebu.

In a phone interview, Zamorano said that new police directors had been appointed in 38 provinces last month.

Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Calderon ordered the replacement of provincial directors starting last month because most of them had completed their two-year tours of duty as their posts.

But Zamorano said the PNP should abide by the provisions of the Local Government Code (Republic Act No. 7160) which provides that governors should have the last say in the appointment of provincial police directors.

Under the law, the PNP will submit three nominees for police director to the local executives. The governor or mayor will then select from among the nominees, or request for a new list of nominees.

The governors asked the President to intervene in their problem during a meeting in Malacañang on Friday.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, who was in the meeting, assured the LPP that the problem would be resolved today, Zamorano said.

LPP assistant secretary general Alex Pascal Villasis said he would confer with police officials to discuss the problem.

Baguio councilors want to know what Korean signs mean

BAGUIO CITY—MANY BUSINESSES AND investors marketing goods to the growing Korean community in this tourist mountain city now need to be translated back to English, it is proposed in ordinance under the magis.

Councilor Edwin Bello Jr. sponsored a measure last week inviting to require all Baguio City markets and advertising structures written in a foreign script or language to come with their English translations.

Municipal told the city council that the proposed law was necessary because foreign storeowners or businesses moving to the foreign market must provide information about their businesses.

The measure requires businesses, schools and buildings with outdoor signage to include "a corresponding English translation of all signboards, bulletin boards, streamers and posters written in a foreign language in order that the general public may be made aware of the contents."

Failure to include a translation means the city will immediately tear down the signboard.

Baguio businesses have started posting marketing streamers printed in Korean because of the huge South Korean population in the summer capital.

The Korean immigration also noted a rise in Korean tourists and students here since 2000.

Many of the signboards written in Korean belong to Korean businesses and schools that operate in Baguio. Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

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Monday, February 5, 2007
5th Week in Ordinary Time

Apathy
1st Reading: Gen 1:1-19
Gospel: Mark 6:53-56

When he crossed the lake, Jesus and his disciples came ashore at Gennesaret where they tied up the boat. As soon as they landed, people recognized Jesus and ran to spread the news throughout the countryside. Wherever he was reported to be—in villages, towns or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him to let them touch just the fringe of his cloak. And all who touched him were cured. Commentary:

We get hard in the way beginning, covering the first 4 days: creation of light, heavens and the earth, light, waters, sun, stars, planets, dry land, and every kind of bird, fish, grass, fruit trees and of what we consider, after, and how fragile our existence is, yet how carefully made to sustain us?

Jesus is almost the work of restoration, of healing, making whole and reconstituting human beings. Everywhere he went to him, bringing others that need to be touched, even to the fringe of his cloak. His power is given freely to anyone who seeks it. This is the same power as that of creation, the power of God to make and keep and make every one. Do we seek His power for others, for the sick, and for ourselves?

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'Coy' Loi may run if Erap 'talks me into it'

By TJ Burgonio

AFTER OPENLY DECLARING THAT SHE wouldn't be seeking reelection, Sen. Loisa "Loi" Ejercito-estrada said she might seek a fresh term in May if her husband, ousted President Joseph Estrada, talked her into it.

Ejercito, a doctor of psychiatry by profession, is eligible to run for reelection but had indicated in the past few weeks that she was getting out of politics to take care of her husband who is detained at his Tanay, Rizal, rest house awaiting the verdict in his plunder trial.

Ejercito said her husband had asked her to be his caregiver.

Yesterday, things appeared to have changed.

"If President (Joseph) Estrada recommends his position and asks me to run, then I am physically and mentally fit to do so," said Ejercito said in a statement.

She said she had received "words of encouragement" from some people, including fellow women lawmaker Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Manila Bulletin publisher Emilio Yap.

The United Opposition-led coalition had included Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, Estrada's son by actress Guia Gomez, in its 12-man senatorial lineup, supposedly in place of the former president's wife whom he had asked not to run.

While acknowledging that her husband would have the last say, Senator Ejercito said she wanted to serve another term so she could see through the passage of some pending bills on health care and environmental protection she had worked on.

She was the principal author of Republic Act No. 9262, or the Violence Against Women and Children's Act of 2004, which is now being used by social workers and law enforcement agencies in helping women and child victims seek justice for abuses.

If the decision on re-run, Ejercito said the Senate would be left without a medical practitioner "to make the country's health and medical services more relevant" since Senate Pro Tempore Juan Flavier, a medical doctor, is also not running this year.

Meanwhile, lawyer Agalinao "Kako" Pimentel III, son of Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., said in a statement he would file his certificate of candidacy at the Commission on Elections today.

The young Pimentel, who topped the bar in 1990, is also running under the UNO-led coalition.

He would be the "voice" of the Mindanaoans, the youth, socio-civic groups, local governments, professionals and disadvantaged sectors such as cultural communities and subsistence farmers and fisherwomen, he said.

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DOH: Ready to take on bird flu

By Yolanda Scinto-Fuertes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—THE DEPARTMENT OF Health has declared its readiness against the avian influenza on the event the dreaded virus reaches the country.

"We are very ready in terms of stockpiles of Tamiflu, the drug of choice against the avian flu. We have P70 million to P80 million worth of (Tamiflu) in various warehouses of the DOH," Health Secretary Francisco Duque III told reporters here on Saturday.

He said the DOH's centers for infectious diseases were also ready like the San Lazaro Institute for Tropical Diseases, Western Visayas Medical Center and the Davao Regional Medical Center.

"We are confidently ready because we were successful in managing SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in 2003. The level of preparation [in managing the possible outbreak of bird flu in the country] is similar to that of SARS," he said.

Only two Filipinos died from SARS—a Pangasinan woman who had come from Canada and her father whom she infected.

"Touch on wood. I hope we still not get (bird flu cases). We remain to be bird flu free. We are one of the only three (Asian) countries remaining without bird flu [cases]. The others are Brunei and Singapore," Duque said.

The DOH, he said, continues to link up with the Department of Agriculture because detection of bird flu cases and preventing the virus from spreading to domestic fowl is the DOH's concern, he said.

Duque said that after the virus infects the fowl and spreads, there is a possibility of the virus' transmission from an infected bird to humans.

At for migratory birds bringing the virus to the country, Duque said it was the responsibility of the DA to take the necessary precautions and measures that these birds do not mix with local birds.

"We warn the public against shooting and hunting as the birds are disoriented, lose their sense of direction and in all likelihood, mingle with local birds and chickens," he said.

SC: Carriers liable

THE SUPREME COURT (2nd Division) ruled that shipping lines or carriers are liable for the loss of cargo unless they can prove that "extraordinary diligence" was exercised to prevent the sea accident.

The ruling stemmed from the petition of Cebu Salvage Corp. (CSC) whose vessel carrying 3,300 metric tons of silica quartz sank off the coast of Opol, Misamis Oriental, in 1988.

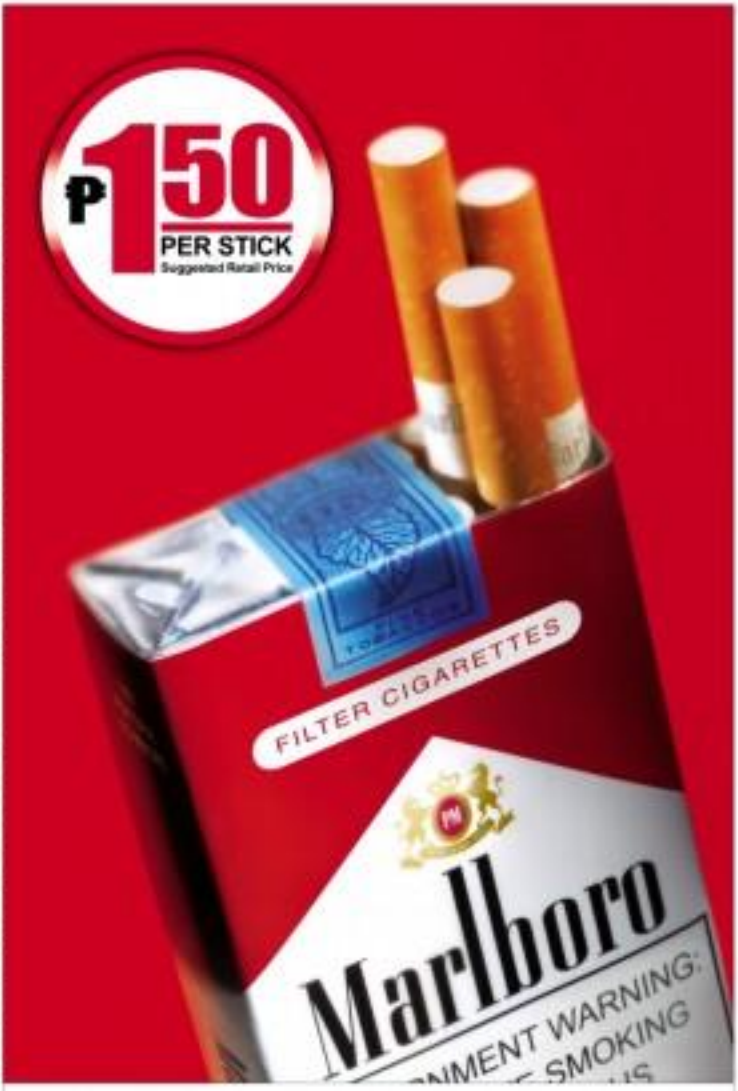
The goods were used in the manufacture of fiberglass.

The cargo owner, Manila Cristina Chemical Industries Inc., later collected P211,500 in insurance money from Philippine Home Insurance Corp.

The insurance company later filed and won a case against CSC in the Makati Regional Trial Court and the Court of Appeals. The SC, in a 10-page decision penned by Justice Renato Corona, upheld the two previous rulings.

The SC said that as a common carrier, CSC was responsible for the lost cargo.

It said that CSC failed to prove that it exercised "extraordinary diligence" to prevent such loss. Christine F. Herrera



Int'l media watchdog gives Arroyo gov't failing grade on press freedom

By Jaileh P. Tesorio
Inquirer Southern Luzon

THE PARIS-BASED REPORTERS WITHOUT Borders (RSF), an international media watchdog, gave the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo a failing mark in upholding press freedom last year.

In its annual report released on Feb. 1, the RSF said murders, assaults, arrests, abusive law suits and censorship were the hallmark of 2006 in the Philippines.

RSF added that despite the arrests of the suspected killers, the authorities failed to stop the wave of violence against journalists—where at least six were killed while doing their job in 2006, majority of whom were prominent on local radio stations.

They were Rolly Cañete, who was gunned down in Pagadian; Bernardo Bulan, who was shot while on his way to DWR station in Puerto Princesa City and Orlando Mendoza, who was murdered in April.

Those journalists received threats before they were killed.

The international media watchdog also took note of at least 23 murder attempts and assaults and 14 arrests in 2006.

The report also cited the author Ibon Villelas to account a month-free-for-all, a journalist in Asia's province who was kidnapped in March. He had spoken out against illegal logging in the region.

"Gloria Arroyo's administration has been widely criticized for its inability to act against the murderers of opposition and human rights activists. Some politically motivated journalists have been victims of this political violence as in the case of Marcel and George Vigo who were killed on Mindanao Island in June. Community media defending the rights of peasant farmers were also targeted. In July, armed men attacked a building housing Radyo Lagitan, one of whose presenters, a peasant union leader, was killed a few months later. The militia is suspected of having killed these officials," the report said.

The report also found itself facing a new enemy in the person of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, who took out a raft of defamation suits, RSF said.

"Within the Arroyo family, the president's husband was lodging defamation suit complaints against more than 40 journalists. President Arroyo said, on 10 November 2006, that her government was 'responsible' for press freedom, an instinction of Philippines democracy," the annual report noted.

But on the same day, journalist Ilhm Tordesillas, a news critic of the government, received yet a third warning her "bite days are numbered."

The report said "the barrage of libel suits brought by the Thrd Gentleman' is a country where defamation is still a criminal offense, put the liberty of scores of journalists in danger."

The First Gentleman claimed a total of P146 million in damages against 40 journalists, including this publication.

But on Feb. 28, the said journalists and other members of the media brought a civil case against Mr. Arroyo for violating press freedom and civil rights and demanded a symbolic P12.5 million in damages.

Mr. Arroyo's legal counsel dismissed the suit as "garbage case" and claimed it won't be right of his client to seek redress whenever he felt aggrieved and his reputation tarnished.

While there were some movements in the struggle against the murderers of journalists—such as the Maslow Espesor case (where four men were found guilty of the murder) the 1990s raid "collection inside the justice system allowed those who ordered the killing to escape scot-free the time being."

Jose certainly, it was recommended filed against the alleged masterminds who were top regional executives of the Department of Agriculture.

Soldiers get own houses

UN-sponsored report smoking gun on global warming

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First part

The report said bluntly that the sequence-denied rise in the earth's surface temperature over the past few years had "very likely" been caused by human activity. The phrase means that the scientists were 90 percent certain of their conclusion. It replaced up the IPCC's previous assessment in 2001, which gave a probability of 66 percent.

Most comprehensive

The essence of these scientists were condensed into a 20-page summary by the panel before it was released to the press and policy makers.

At the launch on Friday Michel Jarraud, secretary general of the World Meteorological Organization, said it was the "most rigorous and comprehensive assessment" of climate change ever produced.

The director of the UN Environment Program, Achim Steiner, said the report presented "unequivocal" evidence that human activity was linked to climate change. "The verdict is now on the table," he said.

Moment of shift

"Feb. 2 may be the day when the question mark was removed from behind the debate about whether human activity and anything to do with climate change. It's a milestone, and a moment of shift."

"Anyone who continues to risk inaction on the evidence presented will one day be considered irresponsible," Steiner said.

In an unprecedented consensus, 500 scientists and representatives of 120 governments on the panel agreed on the key statement, which described how even the scientific term about global warming being revised by man.

The report is believed to have delivered a crippling blow to the opinion of a shrinking group that claims that higher temperatures have been driven by natural causes. This now shifts the debate over climate change from a scientific evidence to how the middle-and governments cope with the bleak horizon of the report.

A 20-page summary of the report was supplied to policy makers.

Highlights of the report

- "Global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, [which] have increased markedly as a result of human activity exceed pre-industrial values."
- "Global increases in carbon dioxide concentrations "are due primarily to fossil fuel industry oil, coal and gas) and land-use change."
- "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising average sea level."
- Eleven of the last 12 years (1995-2006) ranks among the 12 warmest years in the record of global surface temperature (since 1850).
- The [earth's surface temperatures were predicted to rise between 1.8 and 4.0 Celsius and sea levels by 7.1 inches to 23.3 inches by 2100.
- Numerous long-term climate changes have been observed at continental, regional and ocean-basin scales.
- Significantly increased precipitation has been observed in eastern parts of North and South America, northern Europe and northern and central Asia. Drying has been observed in the Sahel, the Mediterranean, southern Africa and parts of southern Asia.
- More intense and longer droughts have been observed over wider areas since 1970, particularly in the tropics (where the Philippines is located) and subtropics. Increased drying, linked with higher temperatures and decreased precipitation have contributed to changes in droughts.
- Widespread changes in extreme temperatures have been observed over the past 50 years. Cold days, cold nights and frosts have become less frequent, while hot days, hot nights and heat waves have become more frequent.
- There has been an increase in the intensity of tropical cyclones in the North Atlantic since about 1970 as well as in some other regions. "It is very likely that heavy precipitation events will increase in frequency, while [more and heavy precipitation events will continue to become more frequent," says the summary.
- In Asia being alarmist, the report is couched in careful scientific language (but is criticized by some quarters as too conservative and an underestimate of the panel's size).

(The vulnerability of the Philippines to global warming will be examined in the next article.)

Tesoro's Group inaugurates 822 Paseo Tesoro

Atty. Nestor and Mrs. Salud Tesoro

More than sixty years ago, Atty. Nestor and Mrs. Salud Tesoro opened the first TESORO'S EXCLUSIVE PHILIPPINE HANDICRAFTS store in Escolta, Manila in 1945. The six-storey building at A. Mabini, Ermita remains the flagship outlet and was inaugurated by President Diosdado Macapagal in 1964.

Pres. Diosdado Macapagal, First Lady Eva Macapagal, Mrs. Salud S. Tesoro, and Alice Tesoro-Guerrero at Tesoro's Makati in 1966.

By 1972 the family spun off the business into several corporations collectively known as TESORO'S GROUP, a 100% family-owned and operated corporation. Today the GROUP CEO is Ms. Isabel "Beng" Tesoro. Tesoro's Retail is chaired by Alice Guerrero, Tesoro's Realty by Lulu Castañeda. Other involved siblings are Tito Tesoro, Mitzi Gutierrez, Bobby Tesoro, Dolly Tesoro and Dottie Catanyagan.

Tesoro's Board of Directors, L. to R: Atty. Lulu T. Castañeda, Beng Tesoro, Alice T. Guerrero, Dolly Tesoro, Atty. Tito Tesoro, Mitzi T. Gutierrez, Bobby Tesoro and Dottie T. Catanyagan

On Tuesday, February 6, Tesoro's Realty Corp. will inaugurate a new three-storey arcade 822 Paseo Tesoro at 822 Arnaiz Avenue, designed by Jonathan Gan and Associates, constructed by Cardinan Builders and project management by Design XL. Special features of 822 Paseo Tesoro are open frontage giving visibility to all tenants, elevator by Schindler, generator by Mitsubishi, glass curtain by Vitrolux and basement parking.

Tesoro's, a trusted name since 1945, has diversified from retail to exports and real estate. Its other commercial properties are 1016 Arnaiz Ave., Casa Tesoro, the Nestor Bldg., the Salud Bldg and Tesoro's Makati the main office. Tesoro's Stores has 9 branches in Metro Manila and Cebu and will open more outlets to serve its discriminating local and foreign clients who favor the best in Philippine handicrafts. Visit Tesoro's at 1325 A. Mabini, Ermita, Tesoro's Makati at 1016 Arnaiz Ave., at The LandMark Makati, Alabang Town Center, the Manila Hotel, Duty Free Phils. Pasay Mall, NAIA Departure Lounge, SM Cebu and Mactan Cebu Int'l Airport.

To promote our national heritage, TESORO'S GROUP with the National Commission of Culture and the Arts, mounted the National Living Treasures Collection which was inaugurated by Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo last June 2006. The on-going exhibit at Tesoro's Makati is open to the public free of charge.

The June 2006 ribbon cutting with Alice Tesoro-Guerrero, Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and Director Felipe de Leon, Jr. of the NCCA.

Acknowledgments

Visit Tesoro's Group website at http://www.tesoros.ph

Doctors need healing, too, says leading Indian MD

By Veh Camerones

DR. ASHOK MEHTA, A LEADING Indian surgeon, is in the Philippines on a mission to remind health professionals that, sometimes, healers need healing, too.

Using a module developed in the United Kingdom and dubbed with Eastern spiritual philosophy, Mehta will be facilitating a three-day workshop in Tagaytay City addressing "job burnout" in the medical profession and a doctor's core values.

"We are pairing meditation and meditation hand together again," the doctor said in an interview last week in Manila, where he delivered a lecture under the auspices of Krishna Rasmala BBL, a spiritual organization active in the Philippines since 1965.

The Tagaytay sessions will be held starting today till Wednesday at the SE Center for Spiritual Learning, with some 45 participating health professionals from the government and private sectors.

The program dubbed "Values in Healthcare: A Spiritual Approach (Volume)" is a brainchild of the Amit Foundation, a UK-based charity that focuses on spirituality and health, in cooperation with BS World Spiritualist Philippine Foundation Inc.

Mehta, who is based in Mumbai and an eminent figure in various medical associations in India, is personally the foundation's scientific and medical advisor.

He said in "bring back the essence of our profession" may dig out like a challenge in the swelling ranks of 50,000-doctors and nurses being lured to go abroad for higher pay in turn bleeding the local medical service.

"More frustration comes to you if you start comparing yourself with other people," he remarked, when told that his seminar participants may include local health workers employed in poorly equipped public hospitals and whose chief source of job-related stress is their dissatisfaction with their pay checks.

"Don't remember yourself; your fulfilling you do depends on how you look at it. Remember that each role we play is a branch role. So give how you don't need a higher salary or higher technology," he stressed.

A surgical oncologist specializing in breast cancer, Mehta has practiced medicine for more than 30 years. Medical school graduates from worldwide had either become so high-tech or so hectic that there seems under the doctor's Hippocratic Oath "have lost something down the road."

"Doctors have been upgrading their skills but are forgetting the heart...we are getting the job done so that the shortest possible time but increasingly without love, the basic quality of God," he said.

In a published essay explaining Vikasa, Mehta once lamented: "Despite improvement in disease management, there is a decline in a sense of purpose and general unhappiness among health providers. This can have a harmful impact on the survival patients."

"Doctors in particular need to know how to care for themselves, because if they do not, they will not be able to give optimum care to their patients," he further wrote.

Physicians, especially if they had lost their patients, tend to carry "self-critical" over the loss, he added. Daily exposure to other people's trauma can also be "emotionally relieving."

"[This] can affect not only a doctor's judgment but perhaps his own faith in himself (as well as) the patient's own faith in his or her treatment."

Immigration posts highest revenue

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION posted its highest ever income in its 101 years of existence in 2006, surpassing nearly P1.5 billion from fees and penalties imposed on aliens.

The bureau's earnings for the year amounted to P1.498 billion, 31 percent more than its income in 2005, Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said in a statement.

The 2006 income, accompanied by 23 percent increase in the number of foreigners logged in 2006, surpassing nearly P1.5 billion from fees and penalties imposed on aliens.

The bureau's earnings for the year amounted to P1.498 billion, 31 percent more than its income in 2005, Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said in a statement.

The 2006 income was the highest posted by the BI in its 66-year history.

"This is the very first time that we received a very large income in the national coffers and we are proud to have contributed our share to...[the] improving our economic and fiscal position," he said in a statement.

He said the increase would be attributed to the continued fight against illegal aliens in the country.

"It is also an indication that the foreigners are complying with our immigration laws and are paying the fees due. They might want to pay in order for the privilege of staying here," he said.

The year 2006 was also the BI's best-ever buyers breakfast day, with 1,000 foreigners availing of the BI's one-day office in Intramuros, Manila. The rest came from the bureau's ports throughout the country.

For the bureau recorded its highest monthly earning last year in January when it collected P135.39 million. That was followed by December and October, when the bureau posted revenues of P130.32 million and P123.4 million, respectively.

The BI had said earlier it would have earned more if not for the dual citizenship law, which allows former Filipino who had become naturalized citizens of other countries to reacquire Philippine citizenship.

The dual citizen ones also considered aliens and not required to report how foreigners for law requirements, including the payment of government fees.

Leila B. Salaverria

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

What can be done

WE SAID IT LAST WEEK; WE'LL SAY IT AGAIN. The participation of the international community in government probes into the continuing series of extrajudicial killings is the best guarantee that the killings will stop. Or, at least, that we will finally learn, beyond any doubt, who is behind them.

EDITORIAL

If the prior President Macapagal-Arroyo had to pay her high-powered entourage in Davos, Switzerland was to listen again and again to international businessmen expressing serious concern about the killings, then her expensive trip was worth it.

When she came back from the World Economic Forum, she devoted a good part of her speech at the traditional New Year's roast that Malacañang hosts for the diplomatic corps to the issue of the unsolved killings. To be sure, she did not exactly welcome the resolution of the Melo fact-finding commission she had formed, which said that "elements of the military" were behind the killings. But she did invite the international community—in particular representatives of the European Union—to help the commission.

We are happy that the Papal Nuncio and the American ambassador have added their voice to the chorus of concern. We do not see their remarks as an affront to our sovereignty or as meddling in our internal affairs. Human rights have a universal constituency. (For the same reason, we have time and again taken the Bush administration to task for its unconscionable handling of detained suspects in Guantanamo.)

None of this is to say, however, that foreign participation is the only guarantee; nothing prevents the Arroyo administration, by itself, from putting an end to the scourge of killings.

It can, for instance, do the following:

First, it makes the Melo Commission report public. Indeed, it is only a matter of time before someone does; if the administration is beaten to the punch, it will again take a beating in public opinion. This may not necessarily be of any moment to an administration already accustomed to dismal public ratings, but it should give pause to a leadership busy courting international opprobrium.)

Second, it forces the Philippine National Police to solve a landmark number of cases, before the campaign season starts in earnest. The President has sought to counternarrative the killings as political violence; we can quibble with this redefinition, but the May elections should give her the opportunity to claim bragging rights. "We will do everything in our power to crack down on political violence leading up to this May elections," she told the diplomatic corps last week. Let her lay the groundwork to make such a claim; that attempt will save many lives.

Third, the Arroyo administration redefines what it means to solve a crime; no longer simply the filing of a case (however weak or makeshift), but the actual incarceration of the suspects. The first is a bureaucratic dodge, which does not solve anything; the second is a tougher but more authentic standard.

Fourth, it (hints retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan) to give an accounting of his actuations when he was still in the service. As the commission noted, Palparan had admitted in a moment of candor that he may have inspired some of the killings. This is an explanation that does not explain enough, that begs to be pursued. If the President's favorite ex-general has truly nothing to hide, what's to prevent her from convincing him to explain himself, in full?

Fifth, the administration broadcasts the message to all and sundry: It will deem the hook at any soldier involved in any of the killings, even if it were done while "off-duty" or off-base, by particulars, the President must convince AFP Chief of Staff Hermogenes Esperon to stop making excuses for his men and instead iron out the political killers in the military with the same zeal he has shown in eliminating recreancies in the ranks.

The to-do list is clear and uncluttered. The only question is, does the President have the will and the discipline to check those most items off her list?

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Public schools used to be better than private schools

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE CURRENT SPATE OF COMPARING THE performances of public school students with those attending private schools, and the two-part series by Quennie N. Lee (Dear Inquirer, 1/29/07 and 1/30/07) expressing surprise that a couple of outstanding students at the Ateneo de Manila University came from public schools and not from private schools, made me look back to my primary and elementary school days. The general situation, where private school students usually perform better, has not always been like that. In the old days, it was the other way around: public school students were better.

I studied in public schools in Malabon during my primary, elementary and early high school. There were several private schools in Malabon at that time but we laughed at those who went there. We considered them "bobo"; they were in private schools only because they were not admitted to public schools "for not making the grade." All the bright students went to public schools. Why a private school when the public school was free and had a better reputation? Those in private schools were there by force of circumstances.

The reason public schools were better then was the teachers. They were more dedicated and hard working. For the first four grade levels, I went to the Tonoyas Barrio School, a four-room wooden schoolhouse (the fifth room was the principal's office). The teachers in the first two grades were only female. I guess boys who were taught how to teach. And how they learned. They were very good. They motivated their pupils to excel. For example, when a grade 2 pupil was able to answer correctly a particularly hard question, the teacher would pick him up and parade him around the room and tell the other pupils to clap their hands. That really motivated the pupils (me, for example) to study, hoping to be paraded around next time.

Then there were the prizes frequently awarded to those who performed well in tests and recitations. They were usually given away by just cheap medals or religious pins, or framed religious pictures. But how proud we were to bring those prizes home and how proud our parents were to show them to neighbors. Parents were invited to the school for a talk with the teachers when their children were performing poorly or well.

When I graduated from the primary school, I transferred to the Malabon Elementary School in Flores, which is across the river on the other side of town. To get there, we either had to take a bus-ride or walk. We walked to save our transportation allowance for lunch. It was a long walk, five kilometers each way, but it wasn't tiring because there were plenty of us children walking. Children from our barrio had to walk a longer way because we first had to walk a kilometer or so to the bridge which we had to cross to reach the main road leading to the school.

But there was a shorter way—across the river, by banca. We would walk across Bahayang Dilim to our barrio to reach the river where our banca was. It was fun crossing the river, back and forth, for a few centavos. On the other side, we walked across more Bahayang Dilim, through some backyards, and there is the main street only a short distance from the school.

On the way to school, we would pass two private schools. The public school students were so arrogant at that time that we would jeer at the private school students whom we knew. The latter developed a kind of inferiority complex, such that they couldn't look at us straight in the face. We would ask some of our classmates who were attending private school, and they would shamefacedly answer, "Mindi ako matatanggap sa public school, eh (I wasn't admitted to a public school)."

That changed during the war and after liberation. Many students didn't go to school during the three years' Japanese occupation. They didn't want to study Nippongo and many believed that the schooling during the Japanese occupation wouldn't be recognized by the Americans when they returned.

After the Liberation, most of the public schools were destroyed. Those that were not had no desks. They were either commandeered or used for firewood.

I went to Caloocan High School (the former Cecilio Apostol Elementary School) beside the runway of the Nozi airbase, and each of us students had to bring our own chair or stool.

The students from the city were a tough bunch. They bonded together and made a point of bullying students from the provinces. I left us with a tough gang, two members of whom even brought pistols to school. There were frequent fights, outside and inside classrooms, and the chairs became handy for bashing heads.

The next year, our room was told to leave the Cecilio Apostol building and transfer to the Philippine National Railroad cottages in a compound beside the railroad tracks. Again, we had to bring our own chairs and stools there. I think that was the time when public schools began to lose the quality and the private schools started to awaken.

I was becoming a hooligan at Caloocan High, so my father transferred me to St. Anthony Academy in Malabon, a Catholic school run by the Marcellandi sisters; in fact, I didn't want to go to a parochial school remembering how we made fun of students going to private schools. But St. Anthony was a very good school and I was fortunate to have excellent Maryknoll sisters as teachers. They really motivated their students to perform well.

I don't know if the private school situation has been that way ever since.

Pandora's box

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

IT DOES, PRESIDENT OF THE LEGAZPI City Public School Teachers and Employees Association, had an open letter to the editor last Friday. In her letter, Belen laments to the gun. attention of the entire count. in Legazpi after the May 2004 polls. In that count, Noel Rosal won an easy victory with 44,761 votes while his nearest rival, Michael Imperial, got only 33,747 votes. Rosal is currently the mayor of Legazpi.

What compelled Belen and her group to write that letter is that Rosal's legitimacy has been challenged by Imperial and has been upheld by the Comelec's Second Division and then by the Comelec en banc. The case is now pending before the Supreme Court.

What happened was that when the May 2004 election, the counting of the votes for mayor was done in full view of the public and duly agreed by the watchers. The count proceeded the results above. No one complained about any irregularity in the counting. No one among the watchers, including the representatives of the candidates, said the teachers called out the wrong names from the ballot forms. The counting was clearly, transparently, unassailably above-board.

Now comes the curious part. When the ballot boxes got to the Comelec, Imperial challenged the count, claiming that many of the ballots were fake. When the Comelec Second Division opened the boxes, lo and behold, its members did in fact find a lot of fake ballots. Prior to God's, or Bartholomew's, name those things got in there, only they know. The public school teachers at least are absolutely certain the fake ballots were not there when they turned the ballot boxes over to the Comelec. They know that for a fact because all the ballots have their signatures on them. Each of the ballots bears the signatures of the teachers who man

An afternoon at Holy Angel University

HOW DIFFERENT ARE PRIVATE SCHOOLS TO-the life and progress of the nation? I am not referring to what are sometimes called "elite schools," which are generally affluent, but only to the relatively wealthy. I am rather referring to colleges and universities (especially in the provinces)—schools which are within the reach of the middle class or even poorer Filipinos.

The interesting attendance of the Holy Angel University, for which the mayor-Visitacion A. Diño—who installed me as the commencement speaker/president, answered my question in an eloquently romantic flag and warm manner.

But first, today was I doing in Holy Angel U? The campus has fortunate contact to its non-private classes on the 4th Sponsoring Sisters of the Assumption are from Belgium. Their founder, Mother Marie Eugenie de Jesus, who later became Bishop Hello Barnes and co-founder and important benefactor of the Asuncion de Haga where I finished high school. I was told that the Sisters of Assumption de Haga and Holy Angel U are similar in the same architectural style, but both. (The bishop was rushing more door to the Asuncion de Haga when I was in high school. We used to throw coins at the bishop's car which seemed the Asuncion campus. But an elderly lovely did not know. After donating coins for the bishop's dogs with a begging effect, he said, "Sorry. I did not see the episcopal coat-up on the dogs' head." So much about episcopal dogs.)

The bishop had the foresight to see the need for quality but affordable schools, a need now emphasized in the current Constitution. Only be-

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Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

gid U grow out of that foresight. It was started as "an academy envisioned to offer quality but affordable Catholic education to boys and girls of what was then the metropolitan of Angeles," but very few years later, the new president could say in her inaugural speech that the small planted years before had "grown into a giant tree, with a student population of 11,000 and a strong work force of 800, the biggest school in the region and the biggest employer in the city."

Number and size, of course, are not everything. What is more important is meaning. What has the school meant for Angeles City and its environs? We cannot take questions to the extreme of a narrow study, unlike our Asian neighbors, does not financially support private schools, and not only that, it even taxes them and imposes restrictions on their capacity for growth.

Holy Angel U, like other similarly situated schools, has to rely only on the tuition paid by their students can afford to pay and on the generosity of benefactors who appreciate the importance of the mission of schools. And as the new president put it, "In all those years [since I studied in and served the school], I shared in the lives of countless young men and women, many of them of humble origins, who sought the Filipino Dream, not of fabulous fortune or fame, but rather of a decent life, with a good job and a wonderful family with time to worship God and enjoy with relatives and friends, the blessings bestowed, the small values allowed, and the few

Koko's dynasty and the Tausug of Mindanao

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

HIS FOUNDATIVE KING PARENTAL EATS DEFI-stored by Sir Tassel for "advancement," and he replies that political offenders can only be defined in the context of a direct movement, involving members of the same family to a public office in an electoral district. And Koko does, in an example of the Tantalum, Bohol governor with a political patron. No, he admits, there is a political dynasty in San Juan. But no, he says, the Pimentels cannot be accused of maintaining one.

Did Erbo say to engage in chess? Erbo Kuan, of course, knows that in Philippine politics, there are no permanent friends—only permanent interests. And so, as well as methods of establishing a political dynasty, Koko's "dynastic succession" is only one of those variations. When applied to a Moslem area, the election to which is not decided by a single electoral district, Koko's "definition" may get somewhat complicated.

The affairs of governing the family name is another factor that complicates dynasticism. I am sure is best treated Koko's mind that carrying on father Heinz's such is a noble filial responsibility. Hero many times have we heard political families sounding like they were God's gift to the electorate? Like in Negros, "passing on the torch" was a theme of the Cayetano's Senate campaign in 2004, when the electorate had only blind instruction of the sweet-smitten Rene Cayetano.

Koko need not look far and wide for political dynasties. In 2001, the man who defeated him in the gubernatorial race in Sulu—Yusop Jikiri—was a victim of a "dynasty" whose own political adversary defines political dynasties in yet another way. Bulawan succession is not always direct and although there Hassan succeeded one after the other in the Tagalogan, Misamis Oriental, his "adversary" did not stop

there. Hassan can, in Cagayan de Oro where he neither had political residency nor historical roots. The more chain there are to the game, the better for the dynasty—as Koko's well-to more room for them are just to play his ploy to form a tandem.

Better to use tandem is, by Koko's definition, a it still forms, such the... a family's propensity to increasingly on power through a variety of crafty ways. It is certainly wrong, and the Filipino electorate should learn something to excise it from our political system. Tassel is correct.

• • •

On Feb. 21 and 22, Ateneo de Zamboanga University (AZU) is hosting the biennial Conference on Peoples History and Culture in Southeast Asia on Cross Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Asia. The conference series is one of AZU's contributions to the continuing efforts to integrate local history and culture into the regular international curriculum of Western Mindanao schools, colleges and universities. This long term work is, in turn, part of the greater thrust to promote peace through better inter-cultural understanding and appreciation.

In the past, AZU had hosted well-attended conferences on "Western Mindanao in 1899" (May 30-31, 1998), on the "Chabacano Language" (June 11-12, 1999), on "Sigua Culture and History" (Feb. 25-27, 2002), on "Subanon Culture and History" (Feb. 10-12, 2003), and on "Yakan Culture and History" (Feb. 23-24, 2004).

More than established participation is expected to attend this year's Tausug Conference. They will be mainly educators and include people in church and government representatives, NGOs, students, researchers and the culturist. The conference's main offering is a series of papers presentations by historians, anthropologists, folklore researchers and Tausug literature patrons. To be discussed are: Tausug History (Dr. Cesar Adib Majul, University of the Philippines); Conflict (Dr. Samuel Tan, University of Asia and the Pacific); Geography (Ligaya Amilbangsa); Peace and Development (Dr. Antonietta Rasell); and Preservation of Intangible Heritage (Dr. Jesus Peralta of the NCCA). The papers will be published in the Culture and Peace Studies, the AZU's journal on peace and conflict.

The conference will also feature some special cultural presentations by local Tausug groups. In addition, some Tausug artifacts, arms, food, music and dance will be showcased.

• • •

Comments to tmontalvan@ateneo.edu.ph

A grudge match

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

NATIONAL ARTIST F. SIONIL JOSE SAYS HE has no respect for Class 46. Boys which he personally entertained him express hatred for Ramon Magsaysay in Cebu. "Maybe he's [Class 46] not serious the incident: "Boris was opposed to agrarian reform ... not as a matter of principle but because it was championed by ... Magsaysay whom he loathed. He described him deep ... [Magsaysay] was—for what the Communists call ... ." The joke among Magsaysay's intellectual contemporaries was that he was so dumb, he wanted to repeal the law of supply and demand.

And yes—though the implicated point is not understood is the strong way—it is true that politics is a contact sport. Elections are governed by the bridges and highways he builds for by the ballot box and the windows it dangles on election day. By that measure, the victorious aren't necessarily the winners.

Take the case of Pampanga: he got 68.8 percent of the votes cast, to the first land (only) since he ran for presidency. his position before or since could touch it—only one came close to it (he got 66 percent in 1998) and only two are comparable with regard to second term elections (61.76 percent in 1998 and 61.5 percent in 2001). Only Gary Sana, 61.5 percent in 1998, did that was after spending one-fourth of the national budget on electioneering).

This is why I've always insisted on keeping Joseph Estrada's victory in 1998 in perspective: it was another only in terms of his own previous victories, and not in terms of past elections. His victory was not just with the only plurality, and not majority president of the present-at-last was Carlos Garcia's 41.3 percent in 1957.

Ramos's 1992 victory, by contrast, has a genuine presidential significance—since Ferdinand Marcos in obtained 47 percent in 1969 and 51.1 percent in 1981. Estrada's 39 percent in 1992 (with Fidel Ramos not in the race) and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's 40 percent in 2004 (with Estrada eventually break with Ramos) did in Garcia's 41.3 percent in 2004 (since Ramos responsible to say more. There may be reasons to say that a voter decides on a vice president in a manner different

I FIRST MET DR. ISAIAH ESTEBAN PAVAYAMO AGO WHEN she was still the superintendent of the Davao City Schools Division. At that time, she was already publicly outspoken of the deepening misconceptions, especially in her jurisdiction, by rapist and several other participants from private foundations, NGOs and the academic community in Davao City were in a battle to the Department of Education's Adopt-A-School program as

COMMENTARY

Butch Hernandez

The skill of the gathering was precisely to suppress upon those in the private sector that they too were public education stakeholders and that principles like Adopt-A-School offered them a viable venue to show that they cared about Mindanao's public schools. In that forum, Imigen wondered if it were at all possible to address the problems of public education without at a considerable fashion, especially in Mindanao where stifled conflict periodically ripped through a fragile peace. Unsurprisingly, the key biggest objection is displaced penalty by owners and proprietors of many small and medium businesses, of unemployment without daily only resurfaces in the perpetuation of our society. Jet Holy Angel has always been a school that offers good education to the poor and enterprising middle class."

Holy Angel, like many in the area, suffered from the Pinatubo eruption. But it rebounded with vigor, and despite the fact that it does not receive economic status from the government, Level I accreditation from Pasuco for almost all its programs, and recognition as a Center of Excellence. Holy Angel U takes particular pride in its frequent program Center, whose mission is to promote and enhance the Filipino cultural heritage.

It is common knowledge that the nation is undergoing a severe crisis in education. Beside of fees are being made both by the government and by the private sector in the name of all this, it is good to know that there are schools like this the government is counting on for quality and affordable education to Filipino whose public education has not arrived. We wish Dr. Aclyn Mangay-Villanueva, and other private school presidents similarly situated, all success in their efforts to provide sense of learning for millions of Filipinos.

"We had the chance to exchange views with Dr. Ian Berry Wirth and Ramon Bongga, BEAM's Accreditation project director and deputy project director, respectively. Both Wirth and Bongga have been in the country since BEAM began, and the Imigen they offered showed that the depth of their knowledge went far beyond education related issues.

"While attributes BEAM's success to "no pressures and agreement from the highest level that education is in a state of crisis and that drastic measures need to be taken," Wirth said that "[The] team has "generated an acceptance of a culture of change and an appreciation of the structural nature of the task" by school-system stakeholders.

The BEAM program closely reflects the mission of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power's Education Revolution, which advocates strongly for quality education alongside an equally determined drive for quality improvement as a full-fledged response, from teachers and school administrators, to the education crisis.

Douglas, meanwhile, is also BEAM's school management specialist. He says the program is designed to "help schools to generate school improvement plans premised on improved learning outcomes. This is a very important development, because it elevates the school improvement plan from a mere wish list to a true plan declaration of commitment to quality education by the school and the community it serves.

"Wirth says that BEAM takes a holistic approach "where all factors contributing to the quality of student learning in classrooms or why students are not participating in formal education programs are being addressed simultaneously."

Those who have been in the education sector will be familiar in-service training in English, Math and Science for 3,300 elementary school teachers and 2,218 high school teachers, farming other things, those training sessions focus on learning strategies and styles and conservation approaches to teaching.

BEAM's Materials Development team has, in fact, crafted simplified learning guides based on the Silsimban Learning Competencies prescribed by the Basic Education Curriculum. We have received reports that the teachers in BEAM's target regions have found these learning guides to be extremely helpful. We note that these learning guides are freely available to teachers and interested parties through BEAM's website.

BEAM's education initiative would not be complete without a component to extend continuing support to Mindanao learners. Its partnership with the University of Southern Philippines, Institute of Information Technology, and the Mindanao State University in General Santos City, BEAM has designed and developed a 12-day training program, called Language Education course and Pedagogy (LEAP), to enhance English communication skills, integrate lesson planning and time skills, and to teach teachers in Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education.

Together with LEAP comes the Accelerated Teacher Education Program (ATEP), which seeks to strengthen the teacher education foundations of the outside or Islamic teachers in basic public schools and private schools. At the end of the course, the students become AS Elementary Education degree holders, with majors in Islamic Studies and Arabic.

BEAM has a host of other programs and initiatives that are all impressive. But the state of education in Mindanao is far from optimal. In fact, the Department of Education estimates that more than 50 percent of the 5,000 or so public elementary schools in Regions 11, 12 and the ARMM managed to score at least 75 percent in all of the five subject areas tested.

There are about 3,000 elementary schools and 683 high schools that operate in the 29 highest-risk provinces in BEAM's target regions. About 1.6 million elementary pupils and half a million high school students consider these schools their second home. These schools, their students and their families have the same problems—more or less—that bedevil the rest of the public school system: below par academic achievement, inadequate facilities and inadequately trained teachers. In Mindanao, the situation is exacerbated by poverty, insurgency and the proliferation of armed terrorist groups. There's a clearly social development initiative being implemented in Mindanao but apparently not enough are focused on improving education quality on a sustained basis.

How do Wirth and Bongga—together with the entire 130 strong BEAM project staff—manage to keep their focus in the face of all these? The answer is simple: these dedicated folk still believe in teachers. Wirth listed seven identified traits of teachers who have come to be loved and recognized as "Heroic." Among the seven is social responsibility.

And how about Bongga? Well, aside from meeting specific aims of BEAM assistance regional director, she has joined BEAM as its Philippine project manager. She is just very proud of BEAM's handiwork and she says: "BEAM is a gift from the people of Australia to our children, and we must continue to make that gift count for what?"

Butch Hernandez is the executive director of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power.

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VP should do more than tell seniors to file complaint at Osca

I WAS GLAD TO READ THE RESponse of Vice President Noli de Castro answering senior citizens that they are entitled to a 20 percent discount even when they use credit cards in buying their medicines (Inquirer, 2/3/07). After a consultation with my doctor here in the city, I went to a giant drug store to buy the prescribed medicine that I have to take for one month.

I pulled out my credit card (Visa) together with my senior citizen's card and handed it over to one of the attendants. To my surprise, I was told that the drug store didn't honor the 20 percent discount privilege of senior citizens using the credit card for payment. I told her about the letter of "Kabayan" in the business, but the cashier said that it was management policy not to grant the usual 20 percent discount to credit card buyers.

Since I needed badly the medicine for my ailments, I had to dispose my to forgo the usual senior citizen's discount P3,000 in my card without a single centavo discount. I am now retired and the pension I paid was almost the equivalent of my monthly pension, which I spend mostly for my numerous pills. We can just imagine how many more drugs I could have bought with the 20-percent discount the drug store unchivalrously deprived me of.

Perhaps, Vice President De Castro can help us in personally look into the sales manual of retailing agents and selling strategies due to the latter's office for Senior Citizens affairs to the complaint. I am certain that thousands of senior citizens will be grateful to "Kabayan" for whatever help he can extend to solve this problem.

—BRIGE REYES,
jorgereyes1114@yahoo.com

Proposed law to provide new tools vs terrorism

MAY I RESPECTFULLY COMMENT on the Jan. 26 column of Conrado de Quiros, "Since the year 2000, 11 bombing attacks were perpetrated by terrorists, 12 of which were peace in Manila, including the latest Feb. 1 Ronac Day-Off, Golden Buddha Temple and the new Islamic Center's Iftar snack that left 320 dead and 1,116 injured.

The threats of terrorists is real and ever present. It is not a conclusion of the imagination or wild speculation. It's real. It's everywhere, with the public exposed to imminent danger unless we put terrorists in check, disrupt their plans and arrest and prosecute them before they can kill the innocent and wreak havoc on our society and economy.

Terrorism is an extraordinary crime that necessitates extraordinary remedies in today's current climate of terror. The Super Ferry and Valentine's Day bombings could have been avoided had we had in place a law that could've kept the suspects behind bars, and prevented them from planting their attacks. It is a fact that terrorists are becoming more ingenious and have been using more sophisticated weaponry and technologies in planning and carrying out their attacks. It is therefore a fact that we have been fighting terrorists, a 21st-century crime with an antiquated law (the Revised Penal Code enacted in the 1930s) and with antiquated means and weaponry that are no match to the faceless enemy.

The proposed anti-terrorism law is our government's response to the challenge of trying to win the war on terror without losing our democratic values and ideals. When we fight terrorism, we are defending the proposition that our political life should be free from violence and threats, for a people who live in fear are not free. We can't have democracy without rights, and our rights cannot be secure without democracy.

Our civil rights are not absolute. Such rights must depend upon the survival of the government and must be subordinated to its preservation. It is wrong to suppose that the bill suggests an unqualified attendancy of authority over the individual's right to freedom and liberty. The proposed law only seeks to empower our law enforcement officers by providing them new methods and legal tools to prevent, interdict, arrest and prosecute terrorists to ensure, as far as possible, that the rights of innocent citizens are not violated.

It is only the terrorists who should be afraid of the proposed anti-terrorism law even though we do recognize that even they have rights that we must respect. Law-abiding citizens and legitimate political dissenters have nothing to fear of this law. It is solely meant to protect the citizenry and our democracy, not to destroy it.

The issue should not stop however, at the peacetime of being considered by our anti-laws and procedures which are always linked to political expediency and the quelling of legitimate political dissent. By all means thinking on, we are unwittingly helping the terrorists succeed.

—RICARDO E. BLANCAFLOR,
director for legal, public information and advocacy,
Anti-Terrorism Task Force

LETTERS

Toothless BIR

THE IS INCREDIBLE BUT TRUE. The Bureau of Internal Revenue is a toothless tiger. It seems to be implementation of revenue laws, rules and regulations.

For example, big establishments only the BIR requirements on the issuance of official receipts, disregarding customers' demand for receipts despite the BIR's action. The government is deprived of millions of business establishments' requiring users to issue official receipts.

To reiterate my daughter Maria Bianca's (Bea) Saturday, last December 16th (an awesome Filipino mother from Baguio, Saint Anthony) arrived at his siblings to celebrate Christmas at a popular fast food chain outlet located inside the Central Plaza Mall, Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City. Bea, Cassandra Nicole Hernandez, whose age was paid in full, he was not given an official receipt. All he got was a computer printout that showed the establishment's TIN with three zeroes on both ends instead of the required nine, and there was no official receipt issued at all.

My husband, as the patriarch of the family, demanded an official receipt but the seller told him that the restaurant had run out of official receipts. It is too unusual for big business establishments as well their customers that their official receipts are still in the printing press or with the BIR for registration and assessment.

Can't the BIR impose discipline on those who fail to issue official receipts for business transactions? Or are there other reasons the people are reluctant to enforce the requirement?

—TERESITA UYTIAO PETILA,
Sari, Camalaniugan Nueva Ecija

Has the gov't forgotten RA 7696?

HAVE THE ADMINISTRATION OF the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office, the honorable members of Congress and the President of the Philippine Amputees altogether to implement Republic Act 7696 which provides for the benefits of World War II veterans (who have reached the age of 70) and their spouses?

The law was passed in March 1994 by the Senate and the House of Representatives, then headed by the honorable president Fidel Ramos and then the three (3), respectively. It was signed into law on April 5, 1994 by President Ramos.

It is now Jan. 3, 2007, but the veterans still have to benefit from the law's implementation. The question: Is there still a chance we could enjoy the benefits due us under RA 7696?

Do we need to stop hoping because this law is another example of irresponsible legislation by one or more political leaders?

—JOEL O. RIBBON,
#901 Gladiola St.,
Montmar Village,
Marikina City

COA team authorized to probe AFP deals

MAY I INVITE YOUR ATTENTION to the special report titled "AFP modernization drive spawns," (Inquirer, 1/8, 8, 10/07). The report cited the "special COA team" that "promised to finding to top COA officials as well as to the Ombudsman for the Military" it also said that "the team was only allowed to further investigate the AFP and its dealings [were] not unauthorized."

For the record, no report on such "findings" was presented or submitted to me, and, contrary to what was made to appear in the Inquirer special report, I approved the request of Heidi Mendoza, state auditor 3, Commission on Audit, for an office order granting COA auditors the authority to make an exhaustive investigation on the transactions of the Armed Services of the Philippines beyond the control of Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

Rest assured that this office does not tolerate graft and corruption and will not hesitate to file all complaints and reports that are submitted to us.

—DELANO C. CATAMO,
overall deputy ombudsman,
OIC, deputy ombudsman for the
military and other law
enforcement offices,
Office of the Ombudsman,
3/F Agham Road, Diliman, Q.C.

Not a way to treat OFWs

THE PHILIPPINES IS AN ECOnomic basket? What a President Macapagal-Arroyo, this overseas evangelista, talking about? The Philippine economy is booming such that Filipinos don't have to go abroad to work. What?

The overseas Filipino workers are the only reason the Philippines is still alive. We, they are our newest prophets whose they go home, many of them end up victims of extortion, "courtesy" of the customs in Philippine airports.

Please, somebody, wake up! Is this how the government treats the people who are helping the country survive? The President should give credit where credit is due. It is not the government operatives and medical examinations but the OFWs who are keeping afloat the ailing economy of this Philippine economy.

—RANCEL LEDESMA,
2003 Santa Ana St.,
Huntington Park, CA 90255

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FVR didn't touch AFP modernization funds

THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO THE JAN. 31 column of Sassen I. Pandan, wherein he mentioned the AFP Modernization Program (AFPMP) during and after the Ramos administration.

It looks like Pandan is running out of fresh thoughts. What he said were practically the same things he said on the subject on Dec. 21, 1999, in his old column in The Philippine Star. Unfortunately, the information and data he had eight years ago, which were evidently incomplete and, in some parts, incorrect and misleading, remain so to this date.

Our "Letter to the Editor" responding to Pandan's 1999 column, like many other letters we've written which carried the same misconceptions and/or "space limitations," never found print.

Please allow us to set the record straight in fairness to all concerned.

1. The purchase price of the Sun Bonifacio property agreed upon by the BCDA and the buyer, Bonifacio Land Corp. (BLC) was more than P16.5 billion. The 35 percent share of the AFPMP from the net proceeds of the sale amounted to P5.484 billion. This amount was retained by the BCDA as the Bureau of Treasury (BOT) in seven tranches, from 9th, 28, 1998 to June 8, 1999.

2. The amount was placed by the BOT in special account No. 30034-139 earmarked for the AFPMP. This was enhanced in the course spending because of Treasury annual voucher No. 4607838.

3. The AFP submitted to Office of the President of its readiness to manage the trust fund for the AFPMP on April 30, 1998, barely one month before the national election. Pandan deemed that the handing of the trust fund "just while the money allocated for the program will be placed for full so the incoming administration.

4. During the Estrada administration, the AFPMP was relegated to a low priority. A July 11, 1998 letter of former Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno to then Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado stated that: "The release of the said amount as requested by the AFP cannot be effected." This was found on a July 8, 1999 memo (Chief Diokno to the President) which stated that the AFPMP "will be postponed for a better time when the financial situation is out in the Program can be continuously pursued."

5. On May 20, 2000, the ERB issued a Special Allotment Release Order (Sard) to the AFP for P5.499 billion.

6. Eventually, on June 26, 2000, Orders disbursed from the AFPM Fund the amount of P46.9 million per SCA [number of each allotment] 12004-1. On Aug. 25, 2000, Orders disbursed from the AFPM Fund, the amount of P93.7 million (SCA 11403-3.).

7. The foregoing positively establishes that the AFPM Fund remained intact during and even the end of the Ramos administration; and that the Estrada administration exercised control over, and made disbursements from, the same fund.

—NICK L. LAGUNTOS,
spokesman of former President Fidel V. Ramos

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MICROTEK

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Cold spell pushes up vegetable prices

BAGUIO CITY—THE COLD SPELL HERE INCREASED THE prices of vegetables, at least in the city market.

Traders increased prices because of the presence of tourists, who were drawn to Baguio's cold weather, said not due to frost that reportedly destroyed P10 million worth of vegetables in Atok, Benguet, last week.

Broccoli, which used to sell for P55 and P60 a kilogram last week, costs P80 a kg.

A kilogram of carrots was sold at P35 on Sunday, while cauliflowers went at P40 a kg in stalls that remained by noontime.

Even strawberries, which were being sold on the streets last week for P30 to P40 a kg because of the huge supply, are now sold for P100 a kg.

Traders were concerned that retailers would take advantage of reports on the frost that destroyed the farms of Benguet and Mt. Province.

In a press statement, Imelda Ramos, secretary general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, said reports should not compel traders to increase vegetable prices.

"It is true that the frost affected the vegetable farms in Benguet, like in Atok where 130 hectares were damaged," he said.

He cited reports relayed to KMP by the Cordillera-based farmers group Apit Tabo, which said the frost also damaged 200 ha of kilometer farms and 600 ha of Mankayan farms.

Temperatures in Baguio City dropped to 9 degrees Celsius on Jan. 23, the lowest recorded in three years. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) does not have temperature monitoring facilities in the areas affected by frost (or frozen) and officials claim said the temperature dropped to at least 5 degrees Celsius in their mountain farms.

"The most affected vegetables were potatoes and cabbage," Ramos said.

"Our local chapter in the Apit Tabo is urging that though temperatures dropped by 4 degrees Celsius, vegetable prices should not increase because there are still abundant supplies of the crops. The traders are exploiting the situation and increasing vegetable prices," he said.

Supplies are abundant, said a staffperson at the Baguio City public market.

But she said demand is also up now that tourists are flocking back to this summer capital.

A business convention and a Department of Education-sponsored campus journalism competition have been timed to coincide with the 11th display of the Baguio Flower Festival later this month.

Hotels also reported bookings for the week "because there is a high interest in the cold weather reported by the media," said Benedicto Abambis, city tourism officer.

In Bulacan, vegetable farmers in San Ildefonso town said the prices of vegetables from their town have not increased contrary to reports circulating in their outlets in Metro Manila.

Romeo Mendoza, president of the San Ildefonso Vegetable Growers Association (Disvga), said they wanted to clarify reports being relayed by vendors at the Balintawak and Kalookan markets on Edsa in Quezon City to their buyers that prices had increased due to supply shortage.

There was no shortage, he said, adding that they have more than enough supply of tomatoes, eggplants, bitter gourd, string beans and okra, among others.

He said the traders and vendors were blaming the past attacks and cold weather that has vegetable farms in Baguio and Northern Luzon for the price increase.

He said local vegetable farmers have in fact been forced to drop the prices of their produce because of oversupply.

"The truth is traders monopolize the prices in the market. They buy the vegetables at lower prices from us and, because the prices when they pass these on to consumers," he said. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon, with reports from Carmela Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon*

THE TEMPERATURE in Atok, Benguet drops close to 5 degrees Celsius, which is why frost often hits crops, says Atok Mayor Constancio Bulao. PHOTO BY LIZA AL-AGAN/INQUIRER

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DA requesting for ₱4B more in funds for farms

Jerwin's parents need help

By Dennis Jay Santos
Inquirer Mindanao

JERWIN KENNETH DE VERA

BUTUAN CITY—FOUR-MONTH-old Jerwin Paul Bariles may not live longer unless he undergoes a critical operation to clear two large holes in his heart.

The mother he gave life to says she hates his chances to live, according to his doctors.

But for his parents—Edwin, a soldier, and Regina, a commercial government employee—finding the money to save is impossible.

Weighing 8.5 lbs when he was born, the boy appears to be in the pink of health, Regina recalled.

She said it was only after about two weeks since birth when she learned that her baby has a congenital heart disease. A series of tests due to sweating, fever, cough and colds confirmed the condition.

"He was healthy before," Regina said in tube-muffled Jewish. He is already malnourished and his growth stunted.

Dr. Sheldon Pangan said the most dangerous stage in Jerwin's life. He would easily catch infection that could kill or his body. If this happens, he said, the much-needed operation would be futile.

Pangan said the boy must be operated on within a year or else complications would be severe that it "would be impossible for him to have the surgery."

"The risk for the child is high if (the holes) are not closed in time," the pediatric cardiologist, who once worked at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City, explained at the Jesus Dalisay Hospital in Davao City.

"The earlier the better because there is no complication yet," he said, adding that Jerwin's case was in "high risk of infection."

But this teary-eyed father with the same heart disease born to poor families, the chances for Jerwin undergoing the critical operation is very slim.

Regina said the family was told that at least P800,000 was needed, aside from miscellaneous expenses and medication.

Pangan admitted that the cost could increase because it actually "depends also on the category of the operation."

If his condition becomes severe, the surgery becomes more complicated, he said.

Regina said she did not know where to get the money. She said as a contractual worker, she earns P220 per day while her husband earns about P6,000 a month.

She said she could not figure out ways to raise the money, except to appeal for help. She can be reached at mobile phone number 09103333000.

DAVAO CITY—THE DEPARTment of Agriculture is asking for another P3.4 billion in supplemental funds for the rehabilitation of irrigated farmlands to buttress on top of its regular P19.5-billion budget allotment.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said expansion here of "high-value crops such as Philippine Jatropha" that the supplemental fund was critical in conserving 4 million hectares of its lands.

Yap said that without the fund, big, about 27,000 ha. of farmlands would be lost every year in the next two years.

"The President has no objection to ... that fundamental requirement but we need another Cabinet meeting to identify the specific areas," he said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Joel Virador said the DA request, which came as the elections draw near, was untimely.

He said a similar request was made by the department, then under Secretary Leonardo Montemayor, shortly before the 2004 polls.

Virador said the money amounting to more than P6 billion, was allegedly funneled into the Arroyo administration's campaign pot for the purchase of election machineries.

The President has denied the charges.

Sweet Undersecretary Jocelyn Solomo, said to be the man behind the scam, had since fled the country.

Sharing a visit to the Philippine Philippine Development Authority (PDEA) office here, Yap said some of the money from the additional budget would be given to the National Irrigation Authority to beef up rehabilitation of P5 billion.

He said the NIA would use the money to rehabilitate irrigation facilities that could help boost the country's rice production.

He said the government's program on food security could only be achieved with increased production.

Aside from rehabilitating irrigation facilities, he said the government would also be spending on certified and hybrid seeds.

The problem is that compared to traditional seed varieties, hybrid seeds could produce about seven tons per hectare while certified seeds could produce up to six tons per season.

Aquino is spearheading support for rice production. Yap said his department was targeting to increase rice production to seven to eight tons per hectare by then, percent and stop importation.

Last year, the country imported 800,000 tons of rice. *Rhaden Acoc and Judy Quirco, Inquirer Mindanao*

W. Mindanao poll chief asks for Army help

ZAMBOANGA CITY—SOME teachers in Western Mindanao who will serve in the May elections are having second thoughts about accepting assignments in remote areas if they will not be accompanied by soldiers, according to Rohm Agaida Pharis, Commission on Elections director for Western Mindanao.

"I don't think teachers will go to areas without support from the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines)," he told the News," Agaida Pharis told the business.

"They want [the] AFP stationed at the PCP" she said.

Agaida Pharis said the district came from teachers from the towns of Kabasalan and Tigbanan in Zamboanga Sibugay, La Libertad and Siluan in Zamboanga del Norte and Lintua, and Ubatuling, Payao and Ituag in Zamboanga del Sur.

"What we are doing now is passing a resolution, recommending the reconsideration of Task Force Bugo. This reconsideration is based on the present realities in Mindanao," Agaida Pharis said.

Rep. Eugene Bacus, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, said the rules of engaging soldiers in remote towns "has already been discussed, and what are we waiting now is the resolution."

Bacus also confirmed that the PNP agreed to provide security to the main town centers and cities while the AFP would handle the Ituag areas or areas with a history of violence in the past two years.

The Moro group Bayan Muna-partner said the May elections could be another bloody event for the people of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Amirah Lidasan, national vice chair of the Bayan Bangsamoro, said many Moro civilians had heard reports of some politicians amassing guns and employing goons in preparation for the elections.

This, as Deputy Speaker Abdulgani Indanan—a second Sulu cousin, Wahab Akbar—is allegedly buying high-powered firearms for his private army in the province in preparation for the election.

"The governor is all out in stirring the resources of the provincial government in the purchase of firearms. He should be charged because I don't think the provincial government allocated funds for firearms. He is on a shopping spree for high-powered firearms," Indanan told the Inquirer.

"This is not human. The AFP and PNP are aware of this and it's a question as they are not reaching him," Indanan said.

Akbar has denied the allegations. "It's pure lies. Not a single word in true. He is fabricating stories because he wants to create mess in the province and run for governor."

Akbar admitted that he owns several licensed firearms but "I never distributed any firearms to my supporters."

"Firearms are expensive and I don't use government funds just to acquire arms, it's not legal," he added.

"If I have plans of arming terror in Basilan, why storing electronic? I should have done that before. Sakapalihin, is just making a humorous statement to he would generate wider support as he is vying a local post here," Akbar added.

Julie Ydoloa, Comelec director for the ARMM, said she had not received any report about the alleged gunrunning of Governor Julie Ydoloa and Jaffar Papas, Inquirer Mindanao.

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3 nabbed for deadly chemicals

CAMP PEÑA, Lagunas—Police arrested three persons in possession of 31 liters of methamphetamine, a deadly chemical commonly used in illegal drugs, during a raid Sunday in Bayan, Sitio Sapang, Brgy. Sta. Cruz, Nueva Ecija. Police said Benedicto Bayan, 30, and his wife Rebecca, 28, and Rudy Mata, 30, were arrested around 11:30 p.m. Jan. 28 at a police checkpoint along the main road linking Intramuros and Puerto Princesa City in Palawan. The checkpoint was in connection with the gun ban imposed by the Commission on Elections.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Solcom deactivates Task Force Mayon

LEGAZPI CITY—After 10 days, the Armed Forces' Southern Luzon Command deactivated Joint Task Force Mayon Alpha, which served as the backbone of the government's rescue, relief and rehabilitation work in Albay following the widespread and devastating eruption of Mayon Volcano. "In a formal send-off ceremony at Camp Simeon Ola on Jan. 29, Solcom chief Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano said the joint task force, whose members were taken from various units of the Army, Navy and Air Force, was first activated during the Mount Mayon eruption. During the operation, Yano lauded local government officials a day left for P10,000 for providing donations from the Philippine Military Academy Gold Cross for the Sacred Kalinga project in Tarlac, capital City.

Bobby D. Lobaton, Inquirer Southern Luzon

3 brothers die in fire

LABANG, BAGUIO CITY—Two brothers, one of them only 25 days old, died in a fire that gutted their house in Barangay Asiaas Norte here on Monday night. John Leo Enriquez, 3, and his infant brother, Juan Miguel, were left unattended in a locked room on the second floor of a house when fire broke out at around 6 p.m. Police said the fire started in the children's quarters left a few feet from them caused the fire. The parents, Rodolfo and Marivel, were out of their room about 15 minutes before the fire started. The house owners, Leopoldo and Leonora Tandoma, who were living on the ground floor, said they did not immediately notice the fire.

Abraham Rayos, Inquirer Central Luzon

Missing elderly

VILLANUEVA "Nen" Cristobal, 72, has been missing since Jan. 28. He was last seen at Lot 46, Santos Mansion, Malanao, wearing a black sando over a cream one, gray short pants and blue slippers. He stands 5'4" with a small body frame and weighing 109 lbs. Cristobal is illiterate and talks in Ilonggo. He has a pale and has difficulty in recalling things, even his own name. Those who know his whereabouts may bring him to Secret Heart Hospital in Lopez, Mindoro, Bulalan, or call Nonon at Tanon Pier at 09211888282.

CRUCTOMAL

Catanduanes recovery fund

THE PROVINCIAL government of Catanduanes has requested President Macapagal-Arroyo to channel directly to it the P2 million it had requested for the immediate funding of its recovery efforts after Typhoon Reming caused major damage to infrastructures and agriculture. The amount is an integral part of the rehabilitation plan earlier drawn up by the province, which is estimated at P700 million. Gov. Leandro B. Verzosa, Jr. said in a letter addressed to Arroyo that the immediate implementation of vital rehabilitation programs and projects included in the priority list.

Inquirer Southern Luzon

Cop in hot water for shooting cop

CAMP PEÑA, Laguna—A rookie cop is in hot water after he allegedly shot to kill a fellow policeman in Biñan, Laguna over the weekend. Police said PO2 Ramey Hernandez, of the San Pedro, Laguna police, remained in critical condition at the Perpetual Help Hospital in Biñan after PO1 Wilbert Tumacder, assigned at the Carmona, Cavite, police station, shot him at around 1:45 a.m. on Jan. 21. Police said Hernandez was driving his motorcycle in Barangay San Vicente when one of two men in blood another two bullets shot him at least four times. The victim suffered bullet wounds in the chest and right arm. While being rushed to the hospital, Hernandez told the investigators that Tumacder was the one who shot him. Biñan police chief Supt. Josefino Esquivel said the families of the two policemen had a long-standing feud.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Pacquiao-Morales rematch over beer

By Inquirer staff

MEXICAN boxers Erik Morales (left) and the Philippines' Manny Pacquiao hold up their fists during a news conference in Mexico City in this 2005 photo. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

verbally with Morales in the days leading to their November match in Las Vegas, where Pacquiao floored Morales in the third round to seal their super-bantamweight trilogy on a winning note. Juat is unsure with fo the tournament.

"The big (the show) Possible Rematch approached D-B, but he didn't get the response he was expecting," said the banker, who was privy to every detail of the show. "The following day, Bench decided to see Erik in his room, to close the tie. On his way to Erik's room, he met Erik who was also on his way out to do the same thing."

3-day secret shoot

In an interesting day-to-day account, the reunion between two of the boxing world's fiercest gladiators (Juatsa) and Vhey started getting comfortable with each other."

Everything proceeded smoothly from then on.

The two-day shoot for the commercial, which was accomplished in December, was held in a Forbes Park mansion to the second week of January. It was kept under wraps, although when Morales flew to the country for a supposed vacation, there were already reports that he and Pacquiao were going to shoot a commercial for the giant beer company.

Pacquiao dragged off the announcement that clouded the early days of the shoot when interviewed by a television station.

Friends outside ring

"We're friends," said Pacquiao of Morales. "Boxing is a business, outside the ring we're friends."

And that friendship is sealed over bottles of San Miguel Beer, as on the ad says. After the standoff, Morales breaks into a smile and raises two bottles of San Miguel's Pale Pilsen beer, and hands one to Pacquiao.

Then, the Mexican boxing legend utters the line that should end up immortalizing the ad: "Wala kang kaibigan, Manny. Dito ito nagsimula. Mahigpit."

"The objective of the campaign is for San Miguel to be a catalyst in bringing people together, not just to rally for worthwhile," a corporate source explained. "With Pacquiao's victory, we thought it was timely. Our concept for the campaign has been centered on friendship. We've been communicating it through the years. And who would have unlikely rivals Erik or Juat Morales and Manny Pacquiao?"

Morales, who also told a news person that he considers Pacquiao a friend, had no qualms signing up for the campaign. But he was concerned about the story line of the ad in the start, the source said.

"The interest of Morales was how the story would turn, going to look like after the match. 'Sir, couldn't it be for him to be informed. Because it's going to be played in his opponent's face. It's not that he has something against Manny personal-

ly, he was just curious how the story line would come out."

38 takes for 4-word spiel

And then there was the Mexican's speaking fee. The source said that it took the three-division champion 38 takes to perfect his four-word spiel.

"The reason as he got the copy sheet, he kept reading it—even in his car, during lunch. Even if it's just one line, his manner of delivery, his enthusiasm, the inflection is different," the insider said.

Because the ad lineup together two of the most sought-after super stars, overnight as in the drug business, expectations was rife as to how much it cost to finance the ad. However, San Miguel officials refused to divulge even a ballpark figure.

McCann Erickson, the agency of the food conglomerate that handled the commercial, signed a confidentiality clause that bars its members from divulging minutiae of the production cost.

Most expensive ad

Industry sources, however, said this could easily be one of the most expensive commercials in the history of local television.

A business associate of Pacquiao, who also spoke with the business on condition that he and his interest, revealed that Morales got P5 million for the commercial while Bench received P2 million.

The associate said rates for first takers for were already paid by San Miguel and that Pacquiao and the beverage giant made sure that Morales and Bench did not spend a single centavo during their stay here and during the shoot.

In fact, both were driven to and from the location of the shoot in a pair of luxury cars worth P2 million each.

The source did not reveal Pacquiao's talent fee, although the boxer already has a lucrative pact with San Miguel, which requires him to do commercials for the company.

Pacquiao of San Miguel's biggest endorsers, and this is his second commercial with the company after the "Talaan" ad with television star Iza Aquino, which was launched in 2005.

Biceps

And like many film shoots, this one had its share of bloopers.

When Pacquiao and Morales started getting comfortable with each other, the Filipino started mouthing his Mexican counterpart, especially with the latter's speaking lines.

"Bro! Manny kan gamay (Manny-acconsel)," said the source. "Sa sakalahin ako si Morales yung parte (So Morales would end up speaking with the same accent)."

Small wonder it took 38 takes to shoot the Morales sequence.

Because Pacquiao has proven that he can carry himself comfortably in front of the camera—he already has several commercials to his name—all eyes were on Morales during the shoot. And the boxer (full of Power) acquitted himself well.

"He was easy to work with, very professional," said the source. "He never complained. He acts well, he works very well with the camera."

Gracious host

Another event client was little for Morales to complain about since the beer giant took the reunion between him and his rival and the cold was that caused friction between him and Bench.

Pacquiao was a gracious host, the business associate said, so Morales and wife Andrea, gifting them with a couple pendant encrusted in diamonds.

And Morales was warmly accepted by the Filipino people, prompting the Mexican to wonder out loud why he was not loved to a country that is home to his fervent boxing fans.

"He kept asking me why people continued to rush him," the associate said. "He really expected to be a hero of Pinoy here."

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Sheridan Florists

Rock icon pays tribute to Imelda minus shoes

By Inquirer staff

a rock band and a small orchestra.

"This is the place to audition a lot of new material," Byrne told the audience at the start of the show, thanking Concepts Mall for letting him perform the 25 songs he wrote in collaboration with British director Mortimer Whitehouse for the production.

The project, first performed as a song cycle with multimedia elements in Australia last year, is still in development. Byrne recently described it as more akin to a diary or opera than a possible Broadway musical.

In skinny black jeans and a white shirt, Byrne introduced the audience between songs about Imelda Marcos and her felt before serving her husband Ferdinand Marcos, the Philippines' president from 1965 until he fled to Honolulu in 1986.

Like Jackie and Jack

"This is not artistic license, this is reportage," Byrne told a laughing audience after he compared to Marcos' extravagant visits to New York, where she bequeathed the famed nightclub "Studio 54."

"She and Ferdinand were like the Jackie and Jack in the Philippines at the time," he said, referring to the former US President John F. Kennedy and his wife Jacqueline.

Byrne began and finished the set with the title song, "Here Lies Love," which he said was taken from what Marcos assisted guessed on her tombstone.

But he started and the end of the set in addition her televisions and extensive shoe collection.

"So you might have noticed, the shoes were never mentioned," he said, explaining that they were discovered after the Marcos family had fled the Philippines—not the period covered in his work.

"It wasn't just the shoes—there was a whole house of things associated with spousal—but that's another piece right there," he joked, before taking a serious note to add that the Marcos record also included accomplishments such as building schools.

"Of course things got out of hand, but it's not as simple, otherwise, as people might think," Byrne

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InFocus

'Cough up our money!'

Tonyboy Cojuangco was forced last year by the Supreme Court to return 111,415 shares of the Philippine Telecommunication Investment Corp. (PTIC) for their being part of the ill-gotten Marcos wealth.

All's well that ends well, right?

No sir! There is still the unfinished business of collecting from Tonyboy the dividends that accrued from the PTIC shares. He's not yet off the hook, until he coughs up money that belongs to the Filipino people.

And how much does Tonyboy owe us in dividends? Up to 1993 alone, then Rep. Joker Arroyo estimated it at $500 million. In Congress, Arroyo railed at Tonyboy's family emerging as the "richest" in the Philippines, at the expense of poor Filipinos.

"In the Fortune and Forbes listing of the richest families in the world, only the Ayalas were listed but they [unlike the family of Tonyboy Cojuangco] did not reach the $300 million mark," said Arroyo then. "What we are talking about is $500 million.. we cannot treat this as a laughing matter."

We, the people, are not laughing either.

Tonyboy must now owe us billions of dollars in dividends he got from the ill-gotten shares. **Justice has to prevail: Tonyboy should be made to return what does not belong to him!**

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Oxfam International

Repeat of Bautista massacre feared

By Fe Zamora

JOLO, SULU—THE FEAR OF A REpeat of the massacre of a general and his men was constantly playing in the minds of officials who had been sent to the outer rim of Basilan, Benjamin Dolorfino, Muslim Mindanao pulls chief Jed Cobrado said yesterday.

"We were worried that it would take so long, that it would become a crisis. We had to think of the lessons learned from the Bautista massacre," Cobrado told the Inquirer.

Cobrado said he was a lieutenant in the Philippine Constabulary assigned here when Brig. Gen. Teodolfo Bautista, then chief of the Army 1st Infantry Division, was killed along with his men on Basilan Island in Patikul 21 years ago.

"We didn't want to have the guise in confidence-building survive had with the Muslims. At the same time, there are lessons learned such as personnel-wise," he said.

Cobrado noted that Dolorfino did not seem to worry about his personal security as the police chief jokingly said, "Dolorfino has become the spokesperson of the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front)."

Cobrado and Dolorfino are both 1976 graduates of the Philippine Military Academy.

Dolorfino has converted to Islam and married a Muslim woman, so, "I think he has assimilated the culture," Cobrado said, explaining Dolorfino's ease in entering the MNLF camp.

But Dolorfino's closeness with the MNLF did not translate to other Muslims. The MNLF camps in Busbus, Patikul, was overrun by government troops in early 2005.

Lieutenant Colonel Villanueva, an Army battalion commander, died from loss of blood from wounds he suffered during battles to retake the camp. But soon after, the camp was renamed to the MNLF.

Dolorfino: One silent peacemaker

By Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

LUMBAKANA, CITY—HE IS known as the most quiet military officer in the Philippine Marines.

Whenever there are top government and military officials or foreign diplomats around, Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino prefers to stay and listen in the background, unless he is directly asked to speak his mind.

He is admired—even envied—by many officers from both the the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front.

At Camp Teodolfo Bautista, headquarters of Task Force Comet, which is in charge of military operations in the Sulu Archipelago, Dolorfino is referred to jokingly as the deputy commander of MNLF Chair Nur Misuari.

"That's OK, if that makes them happy. It's also an honor having associated with a respected officer," Dolorfino told the Inquirer in May 2006 while he was trying to set up a dialogue between the AFP and the MNLF.

Embracing Islam

A Muslim convert, Dolorfino has also taken the name Ben Muhammad. He admits that embracing Islam has widened his perspective and understanding of the Mindanao conflict.

The author of a paper titled "Sulu's Road Map: A Journey to Peace and Development," Dolorfino has been labeled as one of the few "officers who think out of the military box."

"Societal problems, although multidimensional in nature, always manifest themselves in the military box in the form of peace and order problems (i.e. insurgency, terrorism, criminality, clan wars and ethnic violence). The usual paradigm would be the military approach," Dolorfino asserted in his presentation of his Sulu road map.

More Dolorfinos, please

After a proposed meeting in May 2006 between Joint Task Force Comet and the MNLF's Ustadz Habier Malik Group in a ramp, top MNLF leaders like Asibaidul Misuari road behind Dolorfino and defended him.

That meeting had been called to discuss security arrangements in connection with the visit to Sulu of diplomats from the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

"We are praying for more of the likes of Dolorfino in the AFP," Misuari said. "His character and determination to achieve peace is unmistakable. We love and admire him more for his firmness and openness."

Ms Arroyo's pet

Dolorfino, now head of the National Capital Region Command, is also one of the favored military officers of President Macapagal-Arroyo because of his contributions to bringing armed rebels to the negotiating table to resolve a conflict between the military and Moro rebels in Cotabato, Pikit guerrillas in Central Mindanao in 2005.

He once served as Task Force Ranao commander and deputy commander of the then Southern Command.

During a State of the Nation Address, Ms Arroyo acknowledged Dolorfino's efforts in dealing with the MNLF in Sulu in order to pave the way for mass development projects on the island, to include the entry of U.S. humanitarian missions.

Mutual respect

Thus, Presidential Adviser Jesse Dureza was puzzled when Dolorfino and Undersecretary Ramon Santos were detained at the MNLF camp by Moro rebels that included the group of Malik.

"I talked to and knew Dolorfino and Santos during my stint in and out of their camp," Dureza said, referring to the mutual respect between Dolorfino and Malik.

MNLF releases general, 21 others

From page A1

The release came after the government had installed one of the MNLF group's aides "conditions."

This was an official assurance that the preparatory tripartite talks would push through in Arlidi, Simuh Sentin, in March involving the government, the MNLF and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The tripartite talks will discuss issues related to the implementation of the 1996 peace agreement between Manila and the MNLF.

Malik, in a phone interview, said OIC Ambassador Kaseem El-masry called him on Saturday and assured him that the meeting would push through.

He said the schedule for the tripartite meeting had been agreed on," Malik said.

The government again insisted yesterday that Dolorfino and his companions had not been taken hostage but would not satisfactorily explain the general's statements to the media on Saturday that they were being prevented from leaving camp.

'Virtual hostages'

Dolorfino came closest to saying what seemed apparent. He told The Associated Press by phone before they were released that they were being "virtually held as hostages."

Dolorfino's team and Malik prepared sumptuous food and fruits for them during their two days' stay in the camp.

Yesterday their "hosts" deployed a rear for them to leave.

"The rebels are not bad people to hostage, but we were treated," said Dolorfino, whose party included 11 soldiers.

Former Mindanao State University Chancellor Dr. Jimmy Adiong, who went to Dolorfino's group, said the MNLF camp was surrounded by more than 1,000 armed men.

The place, called Camp Bilan-ag, had been renamed Camp Datuk Bilawarna after the government took control of it but became Camp Bilan-ag again when the group resurfaced to battle at the MNLF.

Dolorfino said he and his group wanted to leave the MNLF camp earlier yesterday to assure the public that they were not being harmed, but they didn't want to embarrass their hosts by leaving before breaking on the deadline to OIC.

Malik himself denied his new had taken Dolorfino's group hostage, claiming the reason Dolorfino's team stayed in the camp for two days was the long discussion they had about peace in Sulu.

MNLF, not Abu Sayyaf

Dolorfino's group was on a peace mission to look into reports that soldiers had engaged MNLF men—and not Abu Sayyaf bandits, as earlier claimed by the military—during heavy fighting on Jan. 10 in Sulu.

At least 10 gunmen were killed during the clash.

Dolorfino said everything went smoothly in their early phase of the talks on Friday, but Malik blew his top when Santos gave a brief report on the tripartite meeting.

"That was when the situation became not so good," Dolorfino said. "He refused to give details of what happened when Santos gave his briefing.

Malik's group, which is sometimes called MNLF Chair Nur Misuari, wants their leader freed so he could attend the tripartite meeting.

"He got nervous because Ustadz (Malik) was really angry that he is smiling now," Dolorfino said before his release.

Dureza said it was made clear to Malik that there would be a tripartite meeting.

"They were so frustrated when they saw an item in a newspaper saying that the tripartite had been scrapped ... That was the reason they were so upset and they thought the government was not sincere," Dureza said.

Dolorfino said Malik told him the repeated postponement of the tripartite talks also affected the MNLF's credibility vis-à-vis its followers.

"He told us that they had been losing face in the eyes of their members because the tripartite meeting was always being postponed," Dolorfino said.

"He told us many things were happening on the ground. Some members got killed because of the absence of a mechanism between the MNLF and the troops on the ground. In his talk as we could not leave the camp until the issue of the tripartite was resolved."

Dolorfino recounted how his team endured sparring detained.

He said that when his group broke farewell to Malik after two hours of talks on Friday, Malik told him they could not leave until 48 hours were to announce the tripartite talks would push through.

"Suddenly he declared that we couldn't leave," Dolorfino said, according to The Associated Press. "It was very tense. Although what they did was against our will, we understood their plight."

"We were virtually held as hostages... We were used as leverage."

Growing attention

Malik denied taking Dolorfino's group hostage, but acknowledged that the rebels "had to do everything to catch the government's attention on the non-implementation of the 1996 peace agreement."

The MNLF was the largest Muslim separatist group in Mindanao until it decided to go for autonomy and signed the 1996 peace accord with Manila.

Many of its members later accused the government of moving in its promises to disburse its fund and economic concessions.

With a report from AP

DOLORFINO and his entourage arrive at Camp Bautista in Bonbon, Jolo. AUTHOR NOT KNOWN

UNDERSECRETARY Ramon Santos gets a tight embrace from Sultan Gus Benjamin Loong in Camp Bautista.

Gov't may allow Nur's provisional release

From page A1

who is he going to represent? He has no firm grip of the leadership of the MNLF," Santos said.

He was referring to the split in the MNLF leadership, one faction of rebels had stood to remove Misuari from the MNLF Central Committee.

MNLF insists on Misuari

Santos gave no details on when or where the meeting will be held, or who will represent each side.

MNLF leader Ustadz Habier Malik, who led a group that detained a government peace team in an MNLF camp in Jolo over the weekend, said the rebels say they fear the Moro front will prevent Misuari to head its delegation in the tripartite talks.

The talks involving the government, the MNLF and the Organization of the Islamic Conference are expected to discuss problems related to the 1996 peace deal between Manila and the MNLF.

Malik said that Misuari was the Filipino leader officially recognized by the OIC and the accredited his presence, the talks—proposed to be held in Jedda—would have little meaning.

Nothing definite

In an interview, Santos said it was not yet definite if Misuari would be allowed to attend the talks.

He would not comment either on what effect Misuari's release would have on his camp cases.

Misuari, a former governor of the autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, has been under house arrest since mid-2000 in New Manila, Quezon City, near St. Luke's Medical Center, where he was previously confined after complaining of vomiting and stomach, including hypertension.

He is facing rebellion charges in connection with an uprising by his followers in Jolo, Sulu, in November 2001.

March 17 date

Until a Makati City court placed him under house arrest, Misuari had been detained at Fort Santo Domingo in Laguna since 2001.

MNLF sources say whether the tripartite meeting would push through was among the reasons that caused the detention of Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino's group by Malik's forces.

Dureza said Malik wanted definite information about the tripartite meeting, including when it would take place, "and took advantage of the occasion."

Dureza said the MNLF was told the meeting would push through but this should be preceded by preparatory talks in Jedda on March 17.

Prime Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the government was committed to fully implementing the 1996 peace agreement.

No quick fixes

"We acknowledge that there are outstanding issues with the MNLF that have to be resolved under the principles of continuity and comprehensiveness of the peace process," he said.

"While there are no quick fixes to the age-old Mindanao conflict, nonetheless, we are moving forward to a final peace through principled negotiations, socio-economic amelioration, focused security measures and international cooperation."

Bunye also stressed that the government was equally committed to concluding a peace pact with the rival Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

With a report from Philsearch

Priests are human, too ...

Front page A1

priest mistakenly anointed not the baby's forehead but the mother's breast. No wonder he (mark) paused on something soft, he later realized.

In a separate ceremony, another priest committed a similar blooper.

But the mother, who was not familiar with the Christian rite, found nothing irregular about it. She went back to the priest and offered his other breast.

In still another blooper, the host fell between a woman's cleavage during communion. Instinctively the priest moved to retrieve the sacred bread, but the woman shrieked and almost created a scandal.

Priests are human beings, too.

Pilide Mindoro – like a priest raising the chalice instead of the host during consecration – may be funny, they shouldn't prevent parishioners from the greater virtue of their faith and community, according to Fr. Efren Gomez, SVD.

"We, [they're funny and] they only show that priests are human beings, too," he told the lecture-patterday.

Apparently, there's a need to demystify the common notion that priests, being ordained ministers, are infallible.

This perception probably explains why miracles committed by priests...or simply the possibility of committing them—are difficult to accept for many parishioners, said Gomez, who has a doctorate in theology from Santo de Manila University.

It's not to say, of course, that the idea should give rein of the cloth license to do wrong.

Gomez said priests were basically faced with two extremes in their relations with their flock.

On the one hand, some express "too much humanity" increasing detachment in the world of their flock to the point of acquiring their vices.

On the other, others remain reclusive, convinced that serving God means staying within the privacy of sanctuary.

Balance

"There has to be balance," said Gomez.

On Friday night, the lecturer sat down with a group of priests and seminarians whose conversation wandered to the lighter side of the priestly ministry.

One seminarian recalled attending Mass in one province where the priest raised the ostensorium instead of the chalice. Lesson: Don't hold anything in both hands at the same time.

Pong

On another occasion, an old priest, who loved playing "word song" for leisure, told elderly church Mass. When the ostensorium (monstrance) broke him up, he inexplicably shouted, "Pong," a matching term.

As a wedding in an upscale village in Makati, one officiating priest's legendary tongue got the better of him.

Known to be a stickler for punctuality, he was incensed when the bride showed up late. When the woman finally arrived and looked apologetically in the direction of the priest, she got an unsavory comment.

"Ang sagal sagal, ang pangit pangit naman! (She's late and she's ugly, too)," the priest said.

During the ceremony, the priest threw not a few dagger looks from friends and relatives of the bride and groom.

Misexpression

After the wedding, the priest thought it best to skip the reception as a sturdy five-star hotel.

"Being human beings, priests have emotions and misexpressions, too," Gomez said. "Those things don't leave them after ordination."

Gomez has had his share of embarrassing moments.

About two years ago, he was asked to say a requiem Mass in Quezon City. He asked the family to write on a piece of paper the first name of the deceased followed by the bereaved loved ones.

Before he could finish praying "for the soul of Francisco," the family showed almost in unison—"Tadhomo!" It turned out that one relative had not followed the instructions. Francisco was the deceased brother.

Humor

Humor is a potent tool for evangelization, especially in the Philippines where the faithful generally enjoy jokes and colorful anecdotes, according to Gomez.

"We're unlike the Germans who are heavy thinkers," he explained. "Things have lively interplay."

Understandably so, because for all the problems confronting the Filipino Catholic, the last thing he wants is to be in the company of a "stubborn" priest.

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RP maids rally anew

Front page A1

same number of protesters were prevented from proceeding to Malacañang and had to rely on Queen Band baritone Florante's faculties could no longer accommodate the crowd.

Unlike the first Sunday of protests—Jan. 28—there was no increased police presence in Ayala, which is where the traffic of protesting Filipinos.

Ma Yin-chu, Hong Kong police liaison officer, said yesterday's protest was more organized than the first. He placed the number of protesters at 2,000.

If approved, the new rules will require maids who seek revisions to undergo a two- or three-week "competency training and assessment program" recognized by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) at a cost of P18,000-P35,000 (HK$3-$5,800).

Maids in Hong Kong typically earn about $450 a month.

Brion defends rules

In Manila, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas defended the new rules as part of efforts to give maids better protection amid a number of high-profile cases of abuse against them, especially in Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

"The evidence that we have been presenting sits for the longterm and would place the [maids] on a better footing against abuse and exploitation abroad," he said.

"I appeal to our Overseas Filipino workers [not to be misled by] some quarters in their veiled attempts to dismantle the structures that we have set in place," Brion said.

On Friday, the POEA, aside from lowering the minimum age for overseas household service workers from 23 to 23, declared that those with work visas, contracts that were being processed or verified job orders between Dec. 16 and March 1 were also exempted from training and skills assessment as well as from the $$400 basic pay.

Those leaving for another country and whose contracts were finished in 2006 can go back before March 1. They are covered by the $400 minimum salary but not by the skills assessment and certification by the Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (Tesda).

Brion said the revision of some of the rules was not the result of the protest but of consultations with all stakeholders. In fact, he said, the reformed guidelines have set to weed 345 new contracts for domestics in Malaysia, Singapore, Jordan and the Middle East.

"Filipino lives are not like little who we given candy and are expected to be happy. We want to know: What is the truth behind this new policy? This is another source of corruption," Ordóñez said.

The appeal of a Chinese employer and norms of domestic helpers who had passed the assessment tests but lost their jobs to Hong Kong because of their late arrival were the highlight of yesterday's protest.

Joey G. Tabalo, who has worked here for eight years, brought to the rally her certificate of competency from Owwa, which conducts the language and culture exam, and the National Certificate for Household Service Workers from Tesda, which tests the workers' domestic skills.

Tabalo, who lives in on-last, 30, is now jobless. Her employer refused to take her in because she had sought the many extensions her date of arrival as she waited for her certificates.

Now technically a tourist in Hong Kong, Tabalo has nine days to find a new employer or she would have to return to the Philippines, an only jobless but penniless.

The Cagayan de Oro native, who said she has a child in college to support, narrated how she had spent P25,000 to get to Manila for the tests, only to lose her job in Hong Kong.

Catnap and oyster sauce

As part of the assessment tests, Tabalo was asked by Tesda to clean a toilet for five minutes, cook beef stew for 15 minutes and prepare a Hunanese table setting.

She was also asked questions like "What kind of serial will you use for rough floors?"

Tabalo said she tried to explain to the Tesda people that unlike Hunanese floor tiles, the Chinese did not use catnap in their beef stew but oyster sauce but the Manila examiners were adamant. "So I had to do their bidding so I could pass the test," she said in Filipino.

She said the Owwa had interviewed her in Cantonese for the language assessment test but she repeatedly told them in English that she could not understand the language. She said her employer had wanted her to speak in English so they, too, could learn. She passed the Owwa test. With a report from AFP

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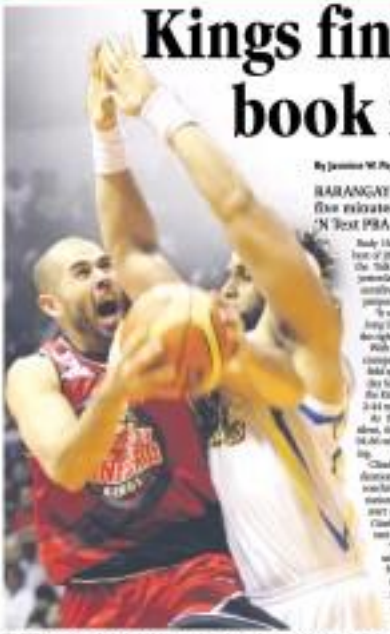
SPORTS

Kings finish off Pals, book finals ticket

By Jasmine W. Paya

BARANGAY GINEBRA PICKED UP THE PACE IN THE FINAL five minutes and secured a ticket in the title game of the Talk 'N Text PBA Philippine Cup.



GINEBRA ace Mario Rudy Hatfield drives to the basket, makes the shot and draws a foul from Air Swordsman Arizona point guy that highlighted his heroics last night. JAMES ALEJO

Rudy Hatfield fired a second career best of 36 points as the Kings repulsed the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals, 99-95, yesterday to clinch their first-of-seven semifinal series in six games at the jampacked Araneta Coliseum.

"It was a tough game," said coach Joey Dichoso. "We just made a run at the right time in the fourth quarter."

With Mark Caguioa sidelined by cramps in the last four minutes, Hatfield sparked an 11-0 rally that Danny Seigle capped with a triple as the Kings forged ahead, 90-85, with 2:44 minutes remaining from 79-83.

As the Phone Pals' gunners fell silent, the Kings extended the gap to 94-86 with 56.6 seconds remaining.

Clinching a finals berth was a vindication for Ginebra, who gave up his coaching job at Sta. Rosa to return to assistant coach Chot Reyes as the start of the season and took over Ginebra from his old ABC teammate Siot Tanquingcen.

"It's very emotional for me," said Dichoso, clearly still reeling from his unceremonious dismissal from ABC. "There's a great possibility I'll be playing my former team."

But Dichoso has no complaint with his new squad.

"I just couldn't say anything about the heart of Ginebra, they just keep on playing," said Dichoso.

For Ginebra, it will be its 16th overall title bid and first Finals appearance since the 2004-2005 Philippine Cup.

The game also marked a milestone for veteran point guard Johnny Abarrientos, who became the league's all-time leader in steals.

Abarrientos registered his 1,301st steal in the 7:46 mark in the second period to eclipse Alvin Patrimonio's record.

Hatfield scored 12 of his game-high output in the fourth quarter aside from hauling 12 rebounds for his 14th double-double performance in the conference.

Caguioa added 15 points for Ginebra, who enforced the absence of injured forward Eric Menk mainly throughout the all-crucial playoff last field.

Simpson faced her officials handled the game with authority to prevent tension from getting out of hand.

Mac Cardona, who was nominated for Talk 'N Text in the series, was ejected with only 36.5 seconds left after incurring a second flagrant foul against Ronald Tubid.

Cardona kicked Tubid on the chest after a scramble for the ball with the Ginebra guard down.

The scores:

First Game

GINEBRA 99—HATFIELD 36 pts. 12 reb. 5 assists 11 rebounds 12 Abarrientos 11 Seigle 8 Tubid 8 Ildefonso 6 Caguioa 5 Cruz 4 Cabatbat 3 Tanquingcen 2 Reyes 1 Ayaay 0 Ilustre 0 Ilustre 0 Ilustre

Aplus METRO
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Binay to Lapid: Welcome to Makati

Makati mayor confident 'thinking voters' will support him

By Dave Quiaoardo

RISING TO OFFICE

A day after Sen. Lito Lapid formally announced his intention to seek the mayoral post in Makati, his toughest rival, incumbent Mayor Jejomar Binay, welcomed his entry into the electoral contest.

At the same time, he expressed confidence that Makati residents would reelect him into office for his third and final term, based on his track record.

"To Mr. Lapid of Pampanga, welcome to Makati," Binay said yesterday in a statement. "To the end, it will be about vision and performance. Given a fair fight, I am confident that the people of Makati will again show their confidence in my leadership."

"In a democracy, anyone who meets the minimum residency requirement can run for public office. Mr. Lapid has always been a Pampanga-go resident but he was able to comply with the residency requirement set by law," he added.

Lapid, Jose Jinggoy Estrada and his partymate Juan Ponce Enrile, finally confirmed on Saturday night reports that he would run for mayor of Makati City, the country's financial capital.

It was earlier reported that the former Pampanga governor was persuaded by President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is also a Pampangueña, to challenge Binay in the May local elections.

His promise for running, as Lapid himself said in a previous interview, was to put a stop to anti-administration rallies being held in the financial center. Binay is the president of the United Opposition.

"Makati is a center of business and power-rallies have no place in that city because these affect economic progress," Lapid had stressed.

To meet the residency requirement, Lapid bought a house on J. Victor Street in Barangay Dio (Sel Pilar).

On Saturday night, when he declared his political plan, a mini reunion was held in the neighborhood with about 100 residents in attendance.

"I have always maintained that life Lapid is just a stone's throw for Mr. Binay," said Binay, who added that he was preparing for "all types of dirty tricks and special operations" the administration would likely use to secure his opponent's win.

While he believed the Arroyo "regime" was "known for breaking the rules," Binay, however, said he was giving the President the benefit of the doubt: "We are praying that the Arroyo administration will respect the voice of the people of Makati."

At the same time, however, he made a jab about possible legal problems Lapid would soon be facing.

Lapid and his son, Mark, who was elected governor when his father ran for a seat in the Senate, may soon be respondents in a graft case that several Pampanga mayors reportedly plan to file against them in connection with allegedly anomalous construction projects in the province.

"But given Mr. Lapid's political problems in his home province of Pampanga, I just hope that he will find the time to tell the people of Makati his program should he be elected mayor," Binay said.

In the end, he added, the fight will boil down to the candidate's knack for governance, especially in a city with a business sector known to be very discerning about the local chief executive's managerial skills.

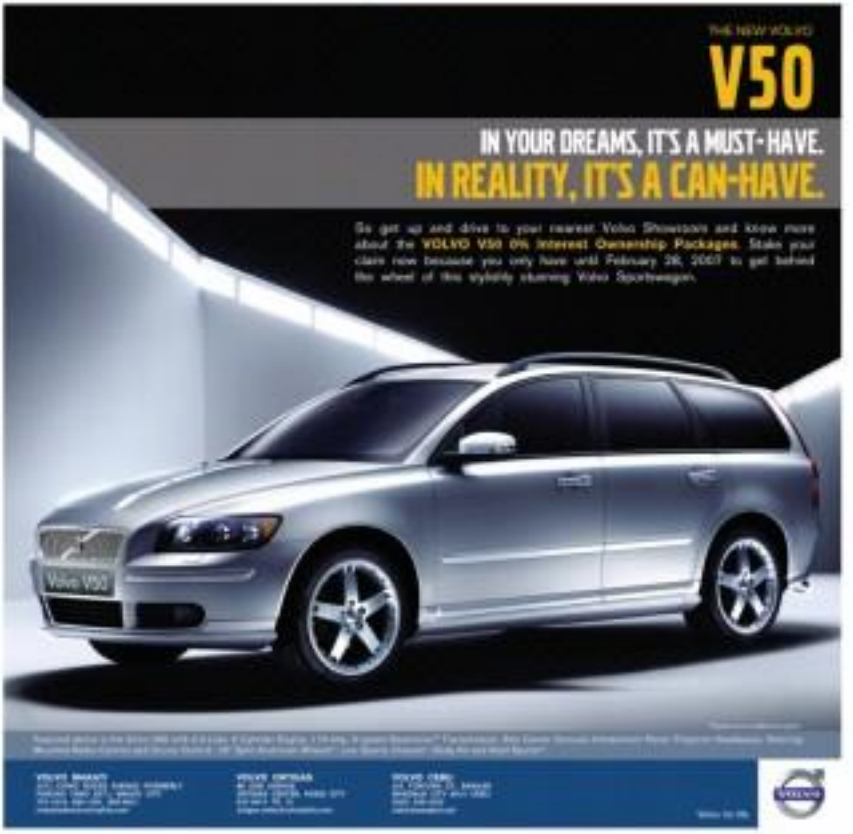
Binay noted that business, civic and community groups have begun organizing forums where candidates can announce their platforms.

"Aside from public services, the business groups are interested in knowing how the candidates will enhance Makati's reputation as a financial center and a hub for information technology-related services. I hope to see Mr. Lapid in these gatherings," he said.

"Makati voters are thinking voters. They listen to what candidates are saying. They scrutinize the qualifications and track record in government of the candidates," Binay added.

NOT A TERMINAL

From reader Maria Sosa, 41, of Sta. Ana, Manila: Attention, Mayor Jejomar Binay! Please install a shed/fence at the corner of Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo) and P. Reyes Street in Makati City. Jeepneys plying the Montvale, PNR, and Carmona routes bound for Makati use this area as a terminal during rush hour, causing traffic jams. It would help if a traffic enforcer is assigned to handle the flow of vehicles in the area.



Heavy weekend traffic on Edsa to continue

METROBRIEFS

Thieves steal computers

TAKING advantage of the darkness, burglars struck in the Metro City mall owned mayor P250,000 worth of computers yesterday, police said. Police said owner Lucy Rocco, 37, discovered the theft when she was about to open the Cyril and Glenn Computer Shop yesterday morning. The door had been forced open, they said. Taken were the monitors, central processing units and keyboards. Police said the Metro Gateway could have broken in between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. yesterday. A neighbor told the police he saw a car parked in front of the shop at about 5:30 a.m.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Fake shoes seized

OPERATIVES of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized P1.3 million worth of counterfeit Vans athletic shoes during simultaneous raids conducted in Pasay City last week. Agents of the NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division (IPRD) handed by Deputy Director Jose Lucio Tan visited the storerooms of Ma Terre shoe Building at 3030 Agrifina Street. The operations were conducted after IPRD agents placed the establishments under surveillance and confirmed that counterfeit products for sale were delivered by Orion Support Services Inc. (OSSI), a postal research firm representing Vans. Charges of trademark infringement under the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines or Republic Act 8293 are being prepared against the owner of the establishment recently.

Regan C. Ong

Pro-life Month activities

PRO-LIFE Philippines has announced its closing of activities for February which is Pro-life Month. Today is "Pro-life Sunday—the role of 'Respect and Care for Life Week.'" All activities starts in the feasting days as of Feb. 10, 1:30 p.m. at Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City until 5 p.m. Parish Center in the main lobby and inside. 8 hours on "caring for less privileged" will be held on Feb. 17 at the Good Shepherd Convent in Cubao City. For more information contact Pro-life Philippines at 9122951.

Organizing seminar slated

A SEMINAR on organizing and managing non-governmental organization, cooperatives, foundations, local government, school or corporate organization will be held on Feb. 7, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Richelle Hotel, Malate, Metro Manila City. For more information, call Mission Accomplished Publishing at 5218384, 9810268171 or e-mail mipublishing@ymail.com or blog.ph/richelle.com.

DID YOU KNOW

THE COLLEGE of Music of the University of the Philippines was created on Feb. 4, 1916, by Legislature Act No. 2623 which was introduced by Sen. Joaquin Louis, brother of Senator Jose and Antonio. The conservatory operated as a UP unit in September of that year in a nipa building in Quiapo, Manila. It moved to its new home in 1924, then to the Diliman campus in 1948. Today it is called the Abelardo Auditorium building and the recital annex is named after an Abelardo, Dr. Antonio Molina Abelardo.

Cyril Arnold and Jaime Aurand

OMEGOSH
An ordinary-looking laundry shop with a not-so-ordinary name in Kina-an Ligas, Quezon City

VFW is called Ilaraja Access Road and Macleod Place Avenue. This has gone on for many years. Paging Pasalubong City government officials!

—CHICO RODRIGUEZ, Pandayan

This is my second time to find CD-cases Cal about this problem. Paging Taguig City Mall! Please have our dead (DBE) St. Edmesia's repaired. Please Long.

—ARIS ROBLIN, Sto. Ana, Taguig City

Ang Alkitaan ng San Lara at St. Jimma Tondo, Manila ay nasa ng pakasakaran. Ayos at nandaanan ng nasasa.

Money
Citizen's call
0918-9985566

—ANTONIO VILLANUEVA, Salawan City

Personnel specialists pore on sign applications for landing the P1.9 billion Zamboanga del Sur airport project. Ground breaking ceremony is set this June. But there are no sidewalks they can use. All the workers of Pandayan and S. Zamora in front of a school, not only the sidewalks but the entire street has been demolished. And wondering if the travelers in this area are endure habits).

—ANTONIO VILLANUEVA, Salawan City

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
CD BOOK, PAMPANGA

INVITATION TO BID

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. WILLING IS WITH OFFICE ACCEPT AT THE ADDRESS BELOW FOR THE FOLLOWING BIDDERS FOR THE SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF THE FOLLOWING:

DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS

ITEM	QUANTITY
69 kV SAN JOSE/MT. ARAYAT LINE TAPPING	ONE (1) SET
Power Circuit Breaker 72.5 kV	
Current Transformer	3 UNITS
Potential Transformer	3 UNITS
Disconnect Switch	Motor Operated, Gang Operated, Manual Operated
Differential Relay	Numerical Relay with Communication

ACCESSORIES
1 unit 69 kV Current Transformer — 3 UNITS
1 unit Station Grounds
1 unit Bus Support
1 unit Other Structure Appurtenant

NOTE: INCLUDES ALL ENGINEERING, MATERIALS AND ELECTRICAL WORKS.

1. Installation of grounding system in supplied equipment
2. Installation of Substation bus structures
3. Wiring & Control Cable Installation
4. Testing and commissioning of equipment
5. Training of employees on operation of equipment

PLACE OF DELIVERY: MAGSA RESTATION, MAGSA, MAGALAT

Please include in your proposal the following:

a. Bid Bond (5% indicate if bid bonds is company)
b. Delivery Date
c. Validity Date
d. Terms of Payment
e. Warranty — Guaranteed to be free from defects for a period of one (1) year from the date of acceptance

You are hereby invited to submit your sealed bid proposal on or before February 7, 2007 (Tuesday) 9:00 AM at PELCO II Board Room, San Roque, Lubao, Pampanga. Opening of bidder shall start on the same date and time.

All bidders are required to submit the following documents in the bid envelope for your documentary and technical evaluation:

1. Company's Profile
2. Audited FS
3. Mayor's / Business Permit
4. Philippine Contractor's License
5. TIN and BIR Registration
6. Income Tax Return
7. Omnibus Sworn Statement as R.A.A. issue in Annex

All bidders shall submit to the BAC Secretariat not later than the said deadline or February 7, 2007 with the documents that is to read at the Lobbies office in the amount of P5,000.00 (Non-refundable) which is to be issued to the name of the bidder or any of the bidders and the representative of the bidding documents.

The bid bond to be submitted to the Pampanga II Electric Cooperative, Inc. in the form of the following:

a. Cash or Manager's Check — 1% to be paid upon
b. Surety Bond Guarantee of 30% — 30% of the total bid price

All bidders are requested to be at PELCO II Board Room enquiries on the opening date and time and submit their bids simultaneously.

The Approved Budget Cost for this particular bidding is ONE MILLION EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND PESOS (P1,800,000.00) ONLY.

The PELCO II has the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formality therein or accept the bid as may be considered most advantageous to the government.

For more information please contact Engr. Rene L. Gomez at PELCO II Lubao or visit our website www.pelco2.com.ph

Engr. ENRIC RENE L. GOMEZ
Chief, Engineering Department

Noted by:
Engr. LEONARDO C. LAGARDE, JR.
General Manager

PHILIPPINE CARABAO CENTER
Department of Agriculture

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, invites all eligible contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the:

Security Services at the PCC National Gene Pool and Headquarters for the Year 2007

The date of making and submitting conferences including the requirements are detailed as follows:

Date of Bidding	March 6, 2007, 10:00 a.m.
Place of Bidding	PCC National Gene Pool and Hqs. (Lot 1), Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija

A. Requirements to be submitted on the date of the bidding

Envelope 1 — Eligibility Requirements
Envelope 2 — Technical Documents
Envelope 3 — Financial Documents
Envelope 4 — Bid Proposal

Pre-bid conference — Wednesday, 01 March, 2007, 10:00 a.m. (Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), National Gene Pool and Hqs. (Lot 1), Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)

Issuance of instructions to bidders

Bid Proposal Forms Selling Schedule: Wednesday, 10 01, 2007

B. Eligibility Requirements

B.1 Legal Documents (Envelope 1)

- Mayor's Permit/ Municipal License (Current)
- Valid Philippine Contractor's License
- BIR TIN and BIR Registration
- Statement that the firm is not blacklisted by any government agency or instrumentality

B.2 Technical Documents (Envelope 2)

- Track record of previous similar transactions including contact person and telephone number
- Manpower complement (number of personnel) that will be assigned to the project. The personnel under the contract shall be subject to the approval of the approved budget for the services to be bidded.
- Valid PNP Security Agencies and Guards Supervision Permit/ Authorization. If the security agency shall also be submitted.

B.3 Financial Documents (Envelope 3)

- Financial Statements prepared independently by the BIR for the preceding calendar year not earlier than two (2) years from the opening bid. Audited financial statements must be stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions.
- Latest Income Tax Return filed manually or through the Electronic Filing and Payment System (EFPS).

B.4 Bid Proposal (Envelope 4)

- Duly filled out accomplished in a Bid Security equivalent to 2% of the total bid price in the form of cashier's/manager's check/ bank draft/ guarantee/ irrevocable letter of credit issued by a bank or a financial institution.

The bidding documents may be obtained from the Property Management Office of Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), National Gene Pool and Hqs. (Lot 1), Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00).

The particulars relative to the Eligibility Bid Bond, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation and Award shall be governed by Republic Act No. 9184 and its implementing rules and regulations.

The PCC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or waive any defect or accept the bid as may be considered most advantageous to the government. Failure to submit the requirements within the prescribed time shall be a ground for disqualification. The bidders do not guarantee or bind that they will be awarded to the proponents or bids. No bids not acceptable that do not conform to the requirements.

Dr. CHRISTINO C. ORAL
Executive Director

By Tara Y. Quimanada

HEADING ALONG EDSA IN THE coming weeks? Fill up your gas tank and avoid unnecessary trips.

Motorists may experience an expect heavy traffic on the major thoroughfare in the coming weekends as the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has scheduled road repairs until March.

The MMDA Metro Base said yesterday that the agency was set to undertake sectional repairs on damaged portions of the 24-km road until next month, with another construction work beginning at 10 p.m. Friday until 5 a.m. Monday.

Instead of losing their temper, motorists and commuters should try to exercise a little patience as the repairs are being carried out for their benefit, MMDA traffic chief Angelito Vergel de Dios said.

"Motorists get angry when we do repairs on weekdays. It's a weekend anyway. Most people do not have to go to work or go to school and for those going to the mall, you don't really have to hurry," Vergel de Dios, executive director of the MMDA Traffic Operations Center, added.

He said the agency scheduled the road repairs during weekends to avoid aggravating the already heavy traffic from Monday to Friday.

Vergel de Dios explained the three-day work schedule: Workers dig up the section to be repaired on Friday, they pour cement in three hours for and then reopen the lane on Monday morning, after the cement has dried.

Last Saturday, the repair work caused traffic to build up on the south and southbound lane of Edsa in the morning and afternoon.

Concrete repairing was undertaken on portions of Edsa's southbound and southbound sides near Makati market, the commuter lane of the southbound service road between Monte de Piedad Street and access to Boni-cord in Cubao, Quezon City, and the third lane on the southbound side near the Metro Rail Transit station on Boni Avenue and the Guadalupe Bridge.

The situation, however, improved yesterday in light to moderate traffic was observed motorists.

'Wowowee' stampede still haunts rescuer; victims seek justice

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Emerson Cana

THE SCENE REMAINS FRESH in his memory. The street was littered with bodies whose faces were beaten to pulp.

The area turned to unbearable stench—a mix of urine and human waste—offering some clues as to how much suffering the victims endured when they were pinned to death.

Army Cpl. Ernesto Ignacio, operations commander Bonanza Airborne was among the first to respond to the stampede in the Philippine Arena (formerly Ulao) a year ago, it said of 71 people died in a stampede that started the airport's Wowowee show.

"My men told medical responders not needed in the area. We thought we would have to take care of people with only minor injuries," testimony said.

Unprepared

He added, however, that he and his team were not prepared for what they saw.

Twenty bodies were sprawled on Capt. Henry Javier Street, nine were huddled on a stairway and were fainting out of exhaustion and shock.

Rescuers entered his memories to search the area for other casualties. They were shocked to find more bodies lined up on the slope going to the compound of the investigation.

"That was my first time to see a big number of casualties," the 32-year-old rescuer said.

His team had responded to a lot of emergencies. But seeing bleeding victims of vehicular accidents or even those with broken limbs had not prepared him for the shock of seeing a big number of bodies, mostly elderly women, lined up on the street.

But Antinero could be consoled with his duty.

Battling down to work

He team managed to revive nine victims with cardiopulmonary failure when they were checked but more had been dead minutes or even hours before they were pulled out of the pile of bodies.

Some of the rescuers broke down the moment they left the area, Antinero recalled. Most of them were quiet during the debriefing procedure.

Some begged off from going around hospitals and morgues to check how many were killed and injured, saying they had nightmares much.

Nightmares

One of them had nightmares even two months after the stampede.

This is what happened, according to survivors and the police:

In an attempt to get ahead of the line and enter the arena to get around seats, people on the street started pushing those in front of them, pinning elderly women, who were pulverized to the hell few lines, against the closed GSP Gate on the Ulao gymnich.

The gate leads to a 75-meter-long slope, descending at an angle of about 30 degrees, according to officials.

Those near the gate gave way, the victims slid down the slope. Falling one on top of the other, crushing children, mothers and grandmothers on the ground and against the railings.

There were two further surges as people, thinking that those in the front lines were already moving, not knowing that there were people who were already trampled upon.

Vigil for justice

On Saturday, exactly a year after the stampede occurred, hundreds of people held a vigil at the Philsports Arena to commemorate the tragedy and call for justice for those killed or injured in the day of tragedy.

Some of those present placed banners bearing messages calling for justice at the gates of the arena.

Rose Nepomuceno, one of the vigil leaders from the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) which is helping some of the victims' kin, said that a multinational company had given them some food for the two-night vigil.

Still waiting

Another vigil leader, Rodolfo Javierto, whose mother Virginia and sister Josephine were among those killed, said that he was still waiting for the pledges made by the "TV Database Foundation."

The foundation was formed by TV network ABS-CBN, whose producer "Wowowee," to provide long-term assistance to families orphaned by the tragedy.

"We only got the P75,000 burial and immediate fee. I am asking for the damages they caused on me, too," Javierto told the Bureau.

"My mother used to receive a monthly pension of almost P10,000 so my father served in the US Army," he added.

But Javierto said they were willing to forgive about filing charges against ABS-CBN as long as the network would extend assistance to the victims.

In March 2006, the National Bureau of Investigation filed charges of reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide and multiple physical injuries and negligence to top executives of ABS-CBN in connection with the stampede.

Still feeding children after 100 years

Gota de Leche's milk rations big boost to health of city's poor

By Tina G. Santos

EVERY THURSDAY, SOME 60 children from indigent families gather in front of a pink building that stands out in the heart of the busy and congested University belt in Manila.

They are among the 250 poor by unenrolled children "enrolled" in the feeding program of an institution considered as the pioneering project of the country's first (at last) nongovernment organization.

Accompanied by their mothers, the children, aged one to five years old, are examined by a pediatrician before they are given a two-week supply of powdered milk.

This has been a common sight in the establishment which many city residents, Manila old-timers in particular, know as Gota de Leche (Drop of Milk), a name derived from its main mission: A milk feeding program for malnourished children.

Lourdes Alfredo-Lopez Santiago, vice president and executive director of La Protectora dela Infancia Inc.—the NGO which continues to operate the century-old Gota de Leche—said its main objective has always been to address the needs of children, particularly those suffering from nutritional ills.

Gota de Leche's pediatrician, Dr. Maloy Villaruz-Garcia, examines the physical health of the recipients until they "graduate" with a clean bill of health. Santiago told the business in an interview.

"Graduates are replaced by new beneficiaries," she said, adding that the children come not only from different parts of Metro Manila but also from nearby provinces.

Milk distribution, Santiago said, used to come on a daily basis. "But we had to consider the fact that most of our beneficiaries are poor. We want to spare them from spending too much for transportation fare every time they go to get their rations, so we made it better a month-and-a-half for those living in the areas."

Founded in 1907 by civic workers, including Teodoro Kalaw, sister of national hero Dr. José P. Rizal, Dr. Fernando Calderon, the first Filipino director of the Philippine General Hospital, and Dr. Jose Bautista, after whom the country's largest government maternity facility was named, Gota de Leche looked after children who were orphaned during the Philippine-American War.

Sandina, urbaner mother Judge Inocencio Almeda Lopez was among the first volunteers (mostly mothers) here, one of the presidents of the institution, said today de Leche's early years were focused on fighting infant mortality. At that time, the country's rate of infant mortality ranked among the highest in the world.

The early beneficiaries of Gota de Leche were nursed by urban, not wet nurses. Other sources of milk included animals such as goats and carabaos, Santiago added.

Standing on a 2,378-sq m property on E. H. Lopez Street (formerly Lepanto Street) in Sampaloc donated by the philanthropist Don Teodoro Yangco, the institution provided milk to babies not only of poor parents but also to those whose mothers were unable to breast-feed.

Santina disclosed that during World War II, even American babies whose parents were prisoners of war had their daily rations delivered by Gota de Leche.

Gota de Leche's work also went uninterrupted even during the Japanese occupation, she said. "The milk feedings went on despite social bombings that endangered the lives not only of the babies but also of the doctors and nurses that attended to them."

But the hardships of war which resulted in an increase in the number of Gota babies, on top of the difficulty of getting a steady supply of milk, later prompted the institution to look for other sources like the farms in Bulacan.

Not long after, Gota decided to switch to powdered milk when supplies from its provincial sources arrived in a ravelled state, she added.

Gota's initial funding came mostly from contributions and gifts from affluent Manila families, income from benefit operas also helped boost the organization's funds that eventually facilitated the purchase of milking cows from dairy-ish and Calcutta to start a dairy barn, Santina said.

"Those cows made up the Bumalio dairy farm which surrounded Gota de Leche beneficiaries of their daily milk rations," she said. Old cows were sold to the highest bidder and income from these activities went to the institution's coffers.

Santina added that its proceeds from the sale of La Protectora's Manila Children's Hospital (later renamed Manila Children's and Lying-in Hospital)—which was established in the 1940s to provide pediatric care to the milk recipients, likewise helped finance Gota de Leche's day-to-day operations.

To date, Gota de Leche survives because of donations from generous organizations and individuals, as well as rentals from pushcart and restaurant operators who set up shop in the institution's premises.

Santina said Gota de Leche's beneficiaries have since grown to include pregnant women, enhancement of the hypertension.

"Pregnant women pray to her for a safe delivery, while children are introduced to the Mestizo with a child," Santina said. There are times, she added, when Gota also provides baking lessons for the children's parents and guardians.

Some years ago, Gota de Leche was visited by the 2006 Unesco Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards after the building, originally designed by famous architect Antonio Arellano, underwent major restoration.

The National Historical Institute also included a historical marker at Gota de Leche in recognition of the structure's outstanding contribution to Philippine architecture.

Another marker honored the pioneering and historic work of La Protectora de la Infancia Inc.

In one of his articles, architect and historian columnist Augusto Villalon, who designed Gota de Leche's restoration project along with a team of professionals, said the building was patterned after one of the architectural world's icons, the Capodimonte chapel basement, to emphasize its historicity.

But beyond bringing back the building to its original 1917 look, Santina takes pride in saying that Gota de Leche, after its restoration, has attracted hosts of its past administrators and staff members to renew their commitment to the institution. "They have once again become involved in our programs," she said.

Once in a while, the staff of Gota de Leche organizes activities for the children, particularly during the holidays. The affairs serve as a sort of a reunion, "especially for Gota babies who have now grown up," according to Santina.

But every now and then, "graduates" also drop by just to express their gratitude to her and other officials, and to remind the institution which has become a symbol of hope in a changing neighborhood.

THE SIGHT de Leche (Drop of Milk) building is named after the project which aims to help children suffering from malnutrition. One hundred years later, the project is still going strong. At right, some of the Bumalio baby recipients their two-week supply of milk.

Urban environmentalists bat for bamboo

By Arnado Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THE "LOWLY" BAMBOO, FOUND in abundance and often ignored, is actually a versatile product, a wonder plant. It has cooling properties. Grown on a large scale, bamboo can serve as the solid and counter global warming. (Think of Al Gore's documentary "an inconvenient Truth.")

In an interview with Mother Earth, Philippine environmentalists the media held recently at the Heritage House and Environment Training Center in Mac Ridge, Quezon City, Environmentary Edgardo C. Manda indicated that the benefits of bamboo to the environment are manifold, along with the possibilities of generating livelihood.

Manda is also director of the Philippine Bamboo Foundation, which is based in Los Baños, Laguna, and chief technical consultant in Pasay City.

The bamboo plant clumps underneath and protects the water system, sequesters carbon and has an intact more than twice the paper and plastics than the fast-growing pine tree. It is earth-quake-resistant, tolerates wide soils, controls erosion and grows the environment.

Manda described the bamboo as "the white tree of life," along with the coconut. In view of the world's shrinking forest, the scientific community now recognizes bamboo as a substitute for timber.

For the lay person, the many uses of bamboo can be an eye-opener. For example, did you know that there is such a thing as bamboo beer? It's said to taste like fruit juice. The various parts of bamboo can also be made into other beverages and medicine.

Bamboo materials and substitutes now use finished products such as bags, shuttle, jewelry, flooring, curtains, mats, carpets, woven articles, chopsticks, clothing, brooms and wooden boards. Bamboo can be exported to the US and Europe.

At Metro Manila, the bamboo is planted in the gardens of residences from homeowners to roof tops, on streets, the mountain surroundings and for landscaping and beautification purposes.

"My love for bamboo has to do with my being against global warming," said environmentalist Lita E. Salvador, a member of Mother Earth Philippines and lives in Ilocos, and resident of Valle Verde 3, Pasig City. "Bamboo cools the air, emits oxygen, saved by the birds, holds water just like trees. Every bit counts if they say the bamboo is the green. The grass of life, while the tree of life is the coconut."

She added, "The bamboo will not be uprooted to the moon, like the big old trees. It protects, whereas the small leaves from the rain, it swears to the west. It's really very plant. That's why it's nice to plant bamboo around the house. Then really cool the surroundings and they're beautiful to look at."

Salvador's house is a kind of mini-showcase of the bamboo. She has the yellow Indio variety, the green Indio, Buddha's belly and Bengali bamboo. These grow in profusion in front of the house, in the elevated garden, and serve as a tall perimeter fence which softens the surroundings.

"The bamboo grows so fast," she observed as she took a visitor around the area. "No cultivation, less maintenance. All you have to do is water it. You don't have to take care of it, just a little water and that's it. It grows in any kind of soil, but grows faster in soil that is loose, damp, loamy, sandy and not too compact (as in river areas and beaches)."

LITA Salvador, an environmentalist, relaxes in her bamboo garden. At right, she holds up a bag made out of bamboo. PHOTOS BY ROGELIO GARCIA

The Bengali bamboo grows up to seven feet and is "very fine" in appearance. "My gardener just cuts it so it will not grow wild," she said.

The Buddha's belly variety is so called because the stalks are "rounder" (fat), just like an extended tummy. And the Indio variety may grow up to 15 feet. The leaves are longer than those of the Bengali bamboo.

Another use for bamboo is an exquisite set of bamboo chimes topped off by a coconut shell, and purchased for the equivalent of P550 in Indonesia. It emits a very pleasing, melodic sound, rather than the fast-tempo, nasally-metallic chimes that hang right beside it.

"If you have a really big garden, you can plant all the east areas of bamboo," Salvador said. "My garden is small, so I just put in the evening every now and then."

There are bamboo jobs that are quite in-size, according seven of country high, and those are used for scaffolding in construction of cities here and abroad. A new variety is the black bamboo which is expensive, as in one plant for P5,000.

"The is a nice variety," noted Salvador. "It's not as tall as the green bamboo and it's very good for decoration and for bags and trays. The color is nice, black, like mahogany."

The Mother Earth convener assures that there are more than 50 bamboo varieties. Sources for seedlings in Metro Manila include the Manila Seedling Bank on Ilang corner Quezon Avenue, and the nurseries in front of White Plains, also in Quezon City.

Since the business possibilities are also immense, what should an entrepreneur who wants to go into bamboo do?

"Talk to a professional, someone who specializes in bamboo," suggested the bamboo lover. These include Manda and the Philippine Bamboo Foundation and Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the nursery Kayo, Jimenez and Flor L. Taruela. The latter are the acknowledged "Bamboo Queens" of Metro Manila.

She will not find the bamboo in Wear "Bamboo is really for house. Bodywound it that way," declared Salvador.

Warming may cause Maldives to disappear

COLOMBO—THE INDIAN OCEAN island chain is a magnet for Hollywood stars such as Tom Cruise, but the Maldives may disappear within generations unless world leaders urgently combat climate change, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom warned.

With a United Nations climate panel forecasting world sea levels likely to rise by up to 59 cm (23.2 inches) by 2100 due to global warming, the risks to the low-lying island chain dotted across 800 km off the tip of India are glaring.

"The average height of the Maldives is 1.5 metres above mean sea level. Therefore, if the rate of sea level rise per century is 59 cm, it would cause a couple of centuries as the most to totally inundate the entire Maldives," an alarmed Gayoom said.

"But of course will happen only if there is no concrete action to address the issue at a global stage," he added. "It is further evidence that no country is in peril, and that timely action is needed to ensure our future survival."

Renowned for its luxury resorts—accommodation is available on atolls now reopened in groups can run to over $1,000 a night—white sand beaches and world-class snorkelling and scuba, tourists in the lynchpin of the Maldives' $800-million economy.

"Our tourism industry will be affected for certain. The travelers of white sandy beaches are one of the main assets of our tourism industry," Gayoom said.

"Climate change will lead to an increase in storms, weather and coral damage too. There are major concerns for the Maldives, which has a narrow base economy."

Of the palm-fringed archipelago's 1,192 islands and coral reef atolls, 199 are inhabited—and the beaches on 60 percent of them are already facing varying degrees of erosion, he added.

The experiences of the nation's 300,000 strong Sunni Muslim population during the December 2004 tsunami serves as a cautionary tale.

While geography helped save the Maldives from the kind of scenes of death and destruction seen in hard-hit countries such as neighboring Sri Lanka, authorities were forced to evacuate 13 islands completely and relocate their residents elsewhere.

The Maldives islands are effectively the peaks of underwater mountains—many are only a few hundred metres across at most—so, without a large land mass to cover us, the tsunami waves just washed over them at a height of around one-metre rather than was lessening as waves went to shallower seas.

"The main threats to our island nations's survival—global warming and sea level rise—measure from beyond our geographical borders," Gayoom said, adding that the Maldives was investing in coastal protection infrastructure.

"We do not wish to become environmental refugees, and we will not leave the Maldives unless we are forced to."

Gayoom takes no comfort from the fact that the UN climate panel's forecast of sea level increase has narrowed from a bracket of 9-88 cm in the year 2100 to 18-59 cm, a reduction some experts see as encouraging.

"It indicates, on the contrary, that sea level rise is a clear and present danger," he said. "Those figures [from the UN panel] are found to act urgently, as sea levels are expected to continue rising for many decades and centuries." Reuters

Thailand OKs copycat version of topselling heart drug

BANGKOK—THAILAND, WHICH PROVIDES free medical care for the poor, is clashing with the powerful pharmaceutical industry by becoming the first country to approve a copycat version of a blockbuster heart disease drug.

In a move aviation hope will set a precedent for developing countries, the army-backed government has decided to allow imports of cheaper generic forms of Plavix, the world's second top-selling medicine, and AIDS drug Kaletra.

Last month's decision has drawn outrage from drug companies who say it damages Thailand's image in the global investment community. But the government argues it is acting in line with World Trade Organization rules.

"Heart disease is one of leading causes of death among Thai people. We are dealing with the lives of many people," said Surapun Sitasomphongs, secretary-general of the health security office at the public health ministry.

"We are just helping our patients, and we decision is consistent with WTO rules," Surapun said.

A WTO deal in 2001 allow nations affected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis a temporary exemption from international laws protecting intellectual property rights.

Plavix, a blood-thinning treatment to prevent heart attacks, costs 120 baht ($3.50) per pill. Surapun said only 20 percent of heart disease patients have been access to the life-saving medicine.

"The generic version approved in January will cost only one to 12 baht per pill," he said.

"We are human beings. Human beings want to survive. If the drug is cheap, people can easily access it and there should be no problem," he said.

Plavix, sold by French-based Sanofi-Aventis and its US partner, Bristol Myers Squibb, raked in global sales of $5.19 billion in 2005. AFP

MOROCCAN FESTIVAL

An entertainer performs during the Bibi Ach'our parade in Casablanca, Feb. 3. Ach'our tradition, Bibi Ach'our (the "Woman on Further Ch'ur'ours") is an old, arise man who knocks on doors and asks for gifts which he then gives to needy children. REUTERS

Iran allows rare peek at sensitive nuke site

NATANZ, IRAN—REUTERS/AP—Seven veteran diesary on the quiet provincial road outside the ancient Iranian city of Isfahan. Then, suddenly, startling Security the mountains, a tall chimney emerges flanked by an impressive complex of buildings.

This is the Iranian plant for converting uranium, a centerpiece of the Islamic republic's nuclear program and rarely opened up to outsiders.

Steel frun souvenir uranium into the gas that can then be fed into centrifuges to make enriched uranium, a substance that can be used to make both nuclear fuel and in an atomic bomb.

Driving along, there is little indication of the strategic importance of the workers Of Isa'mic complex except a raft of yellow "No Photo" signs and occasional anti-aircraft machine guns.

But there is the route of security officials making at the entrance between the importance of the site, just 15 kilometers (9 miles) outside Isfahan, Persia's former imperial capital and a jewel in Iran's tourist crown.

Visits by journalists are almost unknown at the highly protected site but on Saturday drivers were treated to Iran Tehran at his media expense to the outside world that its controversial nuclear program is transparent.

"This is the minimum transparency you can imagine that a country can have," said Iran's ambassador to the UN nuclear watchdog Ali Asghar Soltanieh before taking journalists and visiting envoys on a tour of the site.

"It shows that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran pays due attention to the public opinion of the international community," he added.

Journalists being allowed into the heart of the sensitive plant, journalists were told not to "overstep the boundaries" and chosen a few of had bus on taking pictures of the site's exterior.

Then the assembled foreign and domestic media were given white protective duties and headgear, as distinct from the blue clothing handed to the visiting International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) envoys.

Up by UN Security Council sanctions over its atomic programme and vehemently denying US allegations it is seeking a nuclear weapon, Iran is keen to prove its activities are clear and transparent.

Its decision to open the doors of the Isfahan plant also comes amid mounting Western pressure for Tehran to halt sensitive enrichment activities or face further consequences.

Host much can be interpreted from such a visit by senior non-specialists to obtainable Senarvey, and Libyan ambassador to the IAEA Hosma Emeese said afterwards that it was for other specialists to make conclusions.

The site is marked by gleamingly clean white corridors leading to halls filled with complex metal piping and tanks marked with chemical names like "UAP Aluminum Carbide, 20 percent." At the Isfahan site, uranium yellowcake made from raw mined uranium is turned into UF6 gas, from which enriched uranium is produced. AFP

Half a billion Asians crammed into urban slums, Habitat says

SINGAPORE—ASIAN COUNtries must strive to provide decent housing for more than half a billion urban slum dwellers left behind by the region's robust but uneven economic growth, an international aid group said.

Will 1.13 billion more people expected to move from rural areas to cities in the next 20 years, the situation is set to worsen if not addressed early, US-based Habitat for Humanity said in a report released at the weekend.

This will have severe economic, social and political impact, as most of the migrants are poor people seeking a better life in the city.

"The Asia Pacific region is in the middle of a dramatic rural-urban transition that is shaping the demand for low-income housing," the report said.

"Whether and how this demand will be met over the next 10 years will have far profound bearing on the further economic, social and political direction of the region."

Asia, led by China's sizzling 10.7 gross domestic product expansion last year, has been a favorite region for foreign investment because of strong economic growth.

However, the region is home to 60 percent of the world's slum areas where an estimated 554 million people live—roughly equivalent to the combined population of the 13-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

Most of these slum dwellers live in houses made of temporary materials, have little or no access to safe water, sanitation or other basic necessities, Habitat said.

Illness are overcrowded and often located next to garbage dumps, railroad tracks and flood-prone areas. They're likely access to health services and education and residents are vulnerable to disease.

"In China, India and the rest of the region's giants rush to the front of the global economic development race, we are scarcely afford to leave so many families behind, languishing in poverty," said Habitat's Asia Pacific vice president Brian Peck.

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit, ecumenical Christian housing group dedicated to bringing decent housing to the world's poor.

It has built more than 300,000 houses worldwide and its most famous volunteer is former US president Jimmy Carter.

The report noted that "one of the most disturbing trends present throughout the region is the rise of wealth and income inequality". A stark illustration of this disparity could be seen in the resurgent Singapore property market, where luxury condominium units costing more than a million dollars are snapped up within hours by foreign and local buyers.

On the other hand, millions of urban dwellers in cities such as Manila and Jakarta live in makeshift cardboard or plywood homes—or under bridges. AFP

AGAINST TALKS WITH ETA

Tens of thousands of people rally Feb. 3 in Madrid to protest against negotiations with the violent Basque separatist group ETA, with many lambasting the government for supporting the idea of peace talks. AP

Rebel prophetess who shook Uganda is buried

KAMPALA, UGANDA—A Ugandan prophetess, who led a doomed rebel uprising of hymn-singing followers who believed themselves invulnerable to government bullets, was buried on Saturday.

Alice Lakwena, a former fish monger who claimed inspiration from a Holy Spirit, led a major revolt against the government 20 years ago and though her bizarre followers were routed her movement gave rise to Joseph Kony's rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

She died aged 39 last month at a refugee camp in Kenya where she had lived in exile after the Ugandan army crushed her yearlong rebellion in 1987.

Shedding the beliefs of her northern Acholi tribe and Christian symbolism, Lakwena preached followers they would be immune to bullets and that stones would explode like grenades.

She led an army of 10,000 from her native northern Uganda to within a few days's march of Kampala before her forces were routed and she fled on a bicycle.

But her uprising reflected growing opposition among her Acholi tribe to President Yoweri Museveni and her successor gave rise to Kony's LRA.

The LRA's rural-decade rebellion in northern Uganda, one of Africa's longest running conflicts, has killed tens of thousands of people and forced nearly two million into squalid camps.

Talks since July between the LRA and Kampala have produced a truce that has been largely respected, but no peace deal.

An old woman knelt wailing by Lakwena's open casket in her mother's tumbledown cottage before the lid was closed so she was lowered into her grave after prayers and hymns.

Relatives among the scores of people who gathered for the funeral in the northern village of Bungatira, were anxious to remember her work as a traditional healer before she mobilized a revolt in which thousands died.

"She was our medicine," said her sister Betty Langoya, 53.

"People liked the way she was healing, it was even free of charge." Seeking to regain power other Museveni toppled a junta of Acholi generals in early 1986, Kony and Lakwena were among a crop of Acholi rebel leaders who emerged to fight his writ.

Relatives mourn around the open coffin of Holy Spirit Movement leader Alice Lakwena, a Ugandan prophetess who 20 years ago led a major revolt against the government REUTERS

Across, she adopted the name Lakwena—messenger—after she reported being possessed by the spirit of an Italian soldier during a mystical 40-day interaction in the bush, embarrassing her opposed appeal.

While the two are often said to be cousins, Lakwena denied links to Kony during her exile in Kenya, where she still preached, lost and told followers she would beat AIDS until her death. AP

UK battles lethal bird flu outbreak

SUTTON, ENGLAND—BRITAIN scrambled to contain its first outbreak of the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of bird flu in domestic poultry on Saturday after the virus was found at a farm run by Europe's biggest turkey producer.

Some 2,500 turkeys have died since Thursday at the Bernard Matthews farm near Lowestoft in eastern England. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said all 159,000 birds there would be culled over the next few days.

"We're in new territory," Britain's Deputy Chief Medical Officer Professor Dame Carol Black told the BBC. "We're very confident it is bird flu, until we know how this disease arrived, this is a very aggressive form for all poultry to become ill. Defra said the virus was the same pathogenic Asian strain found last month in Hungary where an outbreak among geese on a farm prompted the slaughter of thousands of birds.

That outbreak followed a wider fall in cases of H5N1 among European poultry since hundreds of turkeys died on a farm in east France about a year ago.

The strain tends to be transmitted to poultry by infected migratory wildfowl.

It has killed at least 165 people worldwide since 2003, most of them in Asia, and more than 200 million birds have died from it, or been killed to prevent its spread.

But it has not yet fulfilled scientists' worst fears by mutating into a form that could be easily transmitted between humans and possibly cause a global pandemic.

Avian flu expert Colin Butter of the Institute of Animal Health said the British outbreak was surprising as it had happened outside the main bird migration period.

"The very thing we need to know is if this is a primary or secondary case. If this is a secondary case, it is much more serious. If this is the first case, as 'reference case,' and we can unwrap it out, the outbreak will be controlled," he said.

A protection zone was established with a radius of 3 km (2 miles) and a surveillance zone of 10 km around the infected farm. Bird gatherings such as bird shows and pigeon racing were suspended nationwide.

Across the North Sea in the Netherlands, Europe's second biggest poultry producer after France, the agriculture ministry assured by ordering farmers to keep poultry indoors to prevent them coming into contact with wild birds.

Norway which has had no cases of the deadly bird flu strain, told farmers to keep poultry indoors in the area south of Nordland county and banned bird gatherings, such as bird shows and competitions.

Britain's poultry industry is worth 1.9 billion pounds ($4.7 billion) and produces 800 million birds each year.

The Health Protection Agency said the current level of risk to humans from H5N1 was extremely low.

In May, 10,000 chickens at three farms in Suffolk, also in eastern England and home to some of Europe's biggest poultry farms, were culled after another strain, H7N3, was detected.

A wild swan found dead in Scotland in March had the H5N9 version of the virus. It was thought to have caught the disease elsewhere, died en route and been washed ashore in Scotland.

Reuters

BLAIR: Contention no longer

Majority of voters want Blair to resign now

LONDON—A BRITISH NEWSPAPER poll suggested Sunday that a majority of voters want Prime Minister Tony Blair to resign immediately, as sum of his Labor Party colleagues said it was time to pick their head name to an end.

An ICM poll for the right-of-center Sunday Express newspaper found that 58 percent thought Blair should quit now while 37 percent backed to stay on.

Support for him to resign straightaway also appeared to be increasing among supporters of his governing senior left party, with 43 percent saying it is time for him to go—and 49 percent not.

Blair is currently roughing out a political storm, in particular over the "cash for honors" probe about whether parties illegally offered seats in Britain's unelected upper chamber of parliament for financial donations.

The Scotland Yard inquiry has seen Blair quizzed twice as a witness and two of his closest aides arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

Amid claims that police are looking at an allegedly new spate of peerages incriminating e-mails, the Sunday Express poll says of a record week for bleak and suggests his authority and standing are disappearing fast.

Across the pursuit of this 1,014 respondents to the poll before and after returning to the police probe had been surveyed up.

The leader of the main opposition Conservative Party, David Cameron, has openly called for Blair to quit, accusing his administration of being "dysfunctional" and "paralyzed" by the affair and other scores controversies.

Blair on Saturday tried to rally the Labor Party faithful, admitting there had been a "great storm raging" in recent days, but adding: "The storm's fury can seem fierce but the ship is on course." He appealed for calm heads in the eye of the storm "but however buffeted, it should not change our course or our confidence." A BBC television interview to be broadcast later Sunday with one of Blair's Labor Party colleagues is unlikely to smooth over troubled waters.

Left winger John Prescott says that the newspaper criticism, part of Blair's current predicament, and open unease within Labor that the "cash for honors" probe is damaging the party and eroding confidence in the political process.

AFP

Nigeria bird flu death confirmed, says WHO

GENEVA—LABORATORY TESTS have confirmed that a 22-year-old woman in Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria, died from the virulent H5N1 strain of bird flu last month, the World Health Organization said Saturday.

"The initial positive test findings from a laboratory in Nigeria were confirmed by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on influenza in London," the WHO said in a statement on its website.

The 19 H5 said samples from all victims of the outbreak, who died in the Nigerian city of Lagos on Jan. 17, had tested negative and did not show any sign of zoonosis, a case of bird flu causing humans.

"Further investigations are under way to identify the source of the infection," the statement said.

Episodic cases of human infection with avian influenza are "not unexpected" in countries like Nigeria, where 18,000 outbreaks have been previously in poultry for almost a year, according to the UN health agency.

Nigeria's government also made an announcement confirming the bird's results and warning that the virus is widespread in Nigerian poultry.

WHO spokesperson Gregory Hartl said there was no immediate sign that the death was more than an isolated human case, although concern about the situation as the latest population centre was heightened.

"Given the extent of poultry infection in Nigeria ... it was just a matter of time before we had a human infection. It's not a surprise," Hartl told AFP.

The WHO said it was working with Nigerian authorities to ensure intensive surveillance.

More reports of suspected cases in Nigeria are expected as people with flu like symptoms seek medical advice.

Scientists fear that the potentially lethal H5N1 strain of bird flu may mutate into a form that human users easily transmissible from person to person, triggering a global pandemic that could kill millions.

"The virus in question is quite virulent for other birds and for humans, there was no sign of adaptation to humans," Hartl said after the test results from the British reference laboratory were announced.

The Nigerian woman died after helping wash and disinfect a chicken her family bought.

Her mother died on Jan. 4 with similar symptoms but no samples were taken for testing, according to the WHO.

Observers have warned that it would be a struggle for Nigeria to contain any major outbreak of bird flu in humans.

The WHO reiterated Saturday that human cases of H5N1 are frequently linked to the slaughter of infected birds at home, and the handling of the carcasses and meat before their cooked.

"These practices represent the highest risk to human infection and are the most important to avoid," it warned.

The Nigerian government said last Saturday: "The federal government wishes to inform the general public that the result of the test of human case of avian influenza in Nigeria, conducted by Nigerian scientists using the upgraded laboratory facilities in Nigeria, has been validated by the World Health Organization (WHO)." "H5N1 is widespread and continuing in the poultry population in Nigeria," the government statement added.

"Currently, outbreaks in poultry have been reported in 49 local government areas, spread across 19 states and the federal capital Territory."

AFP

COWBOYS HAVE ALL THE FUN Chris Harris, from Itasca, Texas, competes in the bareback riding event Feb. 3, at the 50th annual San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo in San Antonio, Texas.

Americans on spending binge, drop savings rate to Depression era-low

By Virginia Munoz

WASHINGTON—AMERICANS SPENT more than they earned last year as the economic expansion pushed the personal savings rate to negative 1.0 percent, the deepest hole since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The figure, published last week by the US Commerce Department, means that not only did Americans spend all their income, they dug into savings and used credit to buy more.

Over the past seven decades, the personal savings was—the difference between post-tax, or disposable, income and spending—has been in negative territory only four times: 1932, 1933, 2005 and 2006.

In the 1930s, the Great Depression explains why Americans had to dip into their savings at a time when a fourth of the workforce was out of a job.

But in 2006 and in 2005, when the personal savings rate slipped in negative 0.4 percent, the economic situation was far different, which bothers economists.

"It's surprising, especially in a period until the economy growing at strongly," said Martha Hunt, an economist professor specialized in savings and consumption issues at Arizona State University in Tempe.

The US economy grew by a robust 3.3 percent in 2006—consumer spending accounts for about two-thirds of US economic output—and the unemployment rate stood the year at 4.6 percent.

"But, I think, is what may be really shocking. We would think that with the unemployment rate so low and the economy growing so vigorously that there wouldn't necessarily be any reason for the saving rate to be so low," Hunt said.

This spending spree is broadly explained, she said, by the sharp rise in housing prices in recent years which has left many Americans feeling rich.

"With the housing market so strong as it's been ... people would feel wealthier and would feel less need to save out of their income," she explained.

Reinforcing the urge to splurge was the ease of borrowing, whether it is financed on home equity or simply using up on credit cards.

Even though the Fed (Federal Reserve) has been raising interest rates considerably, the cost of credit at the retail level is still not particularly high," Hunt said.

As some experts, the personal savings rate figure tends to be an increasingly inaccurate measure of how Americans invest retirement.

The Commerce Department's report "is a wake up call to start changing personal savings behavior," said Brian Gardner, an chief executive of the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association.

Gardner pointed out that half of the 77 million baby boomers, Americans born between 1946 and 1964, will not have the means to support their current standard of living when they reach retirement due to a lack of savings.

The American dream could slide under the glare of unsuspending lifestyle, an insurance and financial services group said.

"The announcement by the Commerce Department that the nation's US savings rate, which is at its lowest level in 75 years, is a bellwether for the future of the American dream," it said.

"The lack of savings, combined with the anemic stake that have accounts in the stock market in the last few decades with respect to pensions, social security and health care, are increasingly putting the dream out of reach for most Americans," BlackRock said a new study it had commissioned revealed that 60 percent of working Americans said they cannot count financial benefits that their parents did.

Countering the alarm bells, American University's Hunt pointed out the savings rate does not take into account capital gains, such as home appreciation, or pre-tax contributions to retirement savings accounts, known as 401(k).

"One would expect the increased home equity and the pre-tax saving in to 401(k)'s to relax the need to save. But why it would cause it to encourage for a more of a public," American University's Hunt said. "It's really a question of magnitude."

AFP

Republic of the Philippines
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Philhealth Regional Office - XI
G.E. Reyes Bldg. Quimpo Blvd., Davao City
Tel. Nos. 296-3370 to 3374 / Telefax: (082) 296-3365
www.philhealth.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, **Philhealth Regional Office XI - Davao** (PRO XI - Davao) wishes to invite bidders for the hiring of **SECURITY SERVICES**:

10 Security Guards to be assigned in Philhealth Regional Office XI Davao City

12 Security Guards to be assigned in the Philhealth Services Offices (3 SO) for each Philhealth Service Office) Digos City, Davao del Sur; Tagum City, Davao del Norte; Nabunturan, Compostela Valley Province and Mati, Davao Oriental.

The Government of the Philippine through Philhealth Regional Office XI - Davao intends to source the Approved Budget for the contract (ABC) to be use in Php 3,887,281.80.

All interested parties are invited to the **Pre-Bid Conference** at the Philhealth Regional Office XI Davao Conference Room on **February 15, 2007 at 10:00 A.M.**

The bid documents shall be available at the General Services Section, Administrative Division of Philhealth Regional Office XI - Davao, Reyes Bldg., Quimpo Blvd., Bajada, Davao City, Davao del Sur (Telefax: (082) 296-3365) starting **February 7, 2007 to March 5, 2007, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php 1,000.00.

The bidders shall submit their duly accomplished bid documents (1) eligibility requirements, (2) technical proposal, and (3) financial proposal in three separate sealed envelopes in person or thru mail, to the Administration Division, **Philhealth Regional Office XI - Davao, Reyes Bldg., Quimpo Boulevard, Bajada, Davao City** (Telefax: (082) 296-3365) on or before **March 5, 2007 at 11:00 A.M.** The official time clock shall be the security clock located at the ground floor. Any bid submitted after the cut-off time will not be accepted. **Opening of bids will follow at 1:00 PM** at the same venue. Any bidder who comes late will not be entertained.

The BAC shall determine if each prospective bidder is eligible to participate in the bidding by examining the pre-qualification documents of each prospective bidder's eligibility requirements or statements against a checklist of requirements, using the **two-envelope/two-stage bidding procedure.**

The Bid Security shall be in an amount at least equal to, and not lesser than a percentage of the approved budget for the contract in the following forms:

Forms of Security	Minimum Amount to ¾ of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	Declaration (5%)	Php 38,872.82
Bank Guarantee	Cash & small payment (10%)	Php 85,440.96

For more information, please call the BAC Secretariat at telephone nos. (082) 296-3365 (082) 296-3370 and (082) 296-3372.

We look forward to your participation in this worthwhile endeavor.

Philhealth reserves the right to waive any formality in the responses to the eligibility requirements and to this invitation. Philhealth further reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **ANGEL M. CENCIANTES**
Chairperson, PRO XI Davao, BAC

The WORLD

Edna Lorraine B. Bueno

135 die in deadliest single bombing in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A SUICIDE bomber killed 135 people on Saturday in the deadliest single bombing in Iraq since the 2003 war, driving a truck laden with one tonne of explosives into a market in a mainly Shiite area of Baghdad.

The blast, which Shiite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki blamed on Saddam Hussein supporters and other Sunni militants, obliterated fruit and vegetable stalls, caved in shopfronts and left the smashed bodies of shoppers strewn in the street.

It came as US and Iraqi troops prepared for a planned offensive seen as a last-ditch effort to stem worsening sectarian bloodshed that kills hundreds in Baghdad every week.

"It was a terrible scene. Many shops and houses were destroyed," said one resident, Jassem, 42, who rushed from his home to help pull people from the rubble after hearing the explosion that rocked central Baghdad.

Maliki vowed in January to launch a crackdown in the capital to catch insurgents who have shelled mosques by his government to get control of security, but it has not yet begun.

US President George W. Bush has said he is sending 21,500 reinforcements to Iraq, most concentrated for the Baghdad offensive, despite vocal opposition at home, especially among Democrats who now control both houses of Congress.

Speaking to House of Representatives Democrats on Saturday, Bush assured them that his commitment to Maliki's government was not "open-ended" and it would have to meet certain benchmarks.

AUS intelligence report said on Friday that an abating violence between mainly Sunni Arabs and politically dominant majority Shiites was not the definition of civil war.

A senior Interior Ministry official, Major General Abdul al-Jabbar, told state television that the suicide bomber had driven a truck with one tonne of explosives.

"All Iraqis were shaken today by this crime," Maliki said in a statement in which he again spoke of his government's determination to crush the militants. "The Saddamists and Takfirists [Sunni militants] have committed another crime." Police said 305 people were wounded. The casualties swamped the capital's hospitals. There were chaotic scenes at the al-Nidhal hospital in central Baghdad, where hallways overflowed with wounded on stretchers.

"I was in my shop and there was a great explosion and the roof fell in on me. I woke up here in hospital," said one man in the hospital with blood streaming down his face.

Emergency workers dragged bodies from the debris and piled them on pickup trucks, a forensic reporter at the scene said.

In Washington, the White House called the suicide bombing an "atrocity" and pledged to help the Iraqi government bring security to Baghdad.

Three car bombs in the same market in December killed 61.

Saturday's blast came hours after Iraq's leading Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, reasserted an appeal to Iraqis to avoid violence.

"Everybody laments the extremely few acts of stand against it and reject the sectarian tension to avoid sinking sectarian differences," his new fatwa, or religious edict, said.

As the worst provision single bombing in Iraq, a suicide car bomber killed 125 people in Hilla south of Baghdad in February 2005. In December 2006 six car bombs in different parts of the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad killed 202 and wounded 258.

The latest bombing will again throw the spotlight on Maliki's planned security sweep in the capital and whether it will succeed where other similar crackdowns have failed.

His critics say an offensive last summer failed because the Iraqi army commander was too young and because he was reluctant to confront the Mehdi Army militia of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, a key political ally.

The Pentagon has said the Mehdi Army now poses a greater threat to peace in Iraq than Sunni Islamist al-Qaeda.

A militant group linked to al-Qaeda—the Islamic State in Iraq—vowed in a web message on Saturday to widen its attacks to all parts of Iraq instead of just focusing on Baghdad and would only stop when "Sunni signs a surrender accord." Bush and Maliki's government must take the lead in arresting the capital and take political progress in agreeing a new oil law that sets out how revenues should be shared and amending the constitution, a demand of minority Sunnis.

In the northern, ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk, seven car bombs, including a suicide attack, killed at least four people and wounded 35. Two of the cars detonated outside the offices of the main Kurdish parties in the city. The Islamic State in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attacks in an Internet statement.

Further north, another native was unplanted in Mosul, Iraq's third largest city, after clashes between insurgents and police erupted in several neighborhoods. Reuters

ABU ABDULLAH, a shop owner who lost two of his sons in Saturday's bomb explosion, weeps as mainly in front of his destroyed shop in the eastern-most Sadriyah market area in predominantly Shiite area of Baghdad, Iraq, Feb. 4. AP

Horrific bomb attacks in Iraq

A LIST OF SOME OF THE DEADLIEST BOMB attacks in Iraq since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003:

✦Aug. 19, 2003—A truck bomb wrecks UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 22 people, including UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello.

✦Aug. 29, 2003—A car bomb kills at least 83 people, including top Shiite Muslim leader Ayatollah Mohammed Bager al-Hakim, at the mosque in Najaf.

✦Feb. 1, 2004—137 people are killed when two suicide bombers blow themselves up in a fight at the offices of the two main Kurdish factions in northern Irbil.

✦Feb. 10, 2004—Suicide car bomb rips through a police station in Iskandariya, south of Baghdad, killing 53.

✦Feb. 11, 2004—Suicide car bomb explodes at an Iraqi army recruitment center in Baghdad, killing 47.

✦March 2, 2004—171 people are killed in twin attacks in Baghdad and Kerbala.

✦Dec. 19, 2004—A suicide car bomb blasts in Najaf. 200 metres from the Imam Ali shrine, kills 51 and wounds 163.

✦Feb. 28, 2005—A suicide car bomb attack in Hilla, south of Baghdad, kills 125 people and wounds 130. It was just one Iraq's worst single blast.

✦July 16, 2005—A suicide bomber in a fake truck near a Shiite mosque in the town of Musayab, kills 98 and wounds 156.

✦Sept. 14, 2005—A suicide bomber kills 114 people and wounds 156 in a Shiite district of Baghdad.

✦Sept. 21, 2005—60 people are killed in three coordinated car bomb attacks in the mixed Shiite and Sunni town of Balad.

✦Nov. 14, 2005—At least 71 people are killed and 150 wounded when suicide bombers blow themselves up inside two Shiite mosques in Ramadi.

✦Jan. 5, 2006—Two suicide bombers kill over 120 people and wound more than 200 on the eve of Shiite holy festivals.

Fifty-three were killed and 146 wounded in Kirkuk and 70 killed and 63 wounded in Ramadi.

✦July 1, 2006—A car bomb attack at a crowded market in Sadr city, a Shiite district of eastern Baghdad, kills 62 and wounds 114. The Supporters of the Sunni People, a previously unknown Iraqi Sunni Muslim group claim responsibility.

✦July 18, 2006—Fifty-nine people are killed by a suicide bomb in Kufa, near Najaf, in an attack claimed by al-Qaida.

✦Aug. 30, 2006—Thirty-five people are killed and 94 injured by two blasts near the Imam Hussein shrine in central Iraqi city of Najaf.

✦Nov. 23, 2006—Six car bombs in different parts of the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad kill 202 people and wound 258.

✦Dec. 12, 2006—A suicide bomber kills 70 people and wounds at least 250 in Tarmia Square in central Baghdad after being a crowd of laborers in his vehicle with promises of work.

✦Jan. 10, 2007—A car bomb and suicide bomber strike the Mustansiriya University in central Baghdad killing at least 70 people and wounding 180.

Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE
- Unity Congress today; Baumann in town /A32

SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Miñoza is champ again

Rosales sets up 1-2 Filipino finish with sizzling 65

‡BANKIE Miñoza savors his second MP Open victory

By Mussey M. Castillo

IT WAS A PERFECT ending to a much-awaited Philippine Open comeback.

And Frankie Miñoza, to borrow the three previous years, had the right word for it—"beautiful."

Playing what he said was "relaxed" golf all week, Miñoza hung tough despite a shaky start to fire a one-under-par 71 yesterday and win Asia's oldest championship by two strokes over his equally-finishing countryman Carrell Rosales.

With Indian countryman Nitesh Nanda in third four stroke trailing throughout the day the country's No. 1 shotmaker had a wonderful tension-ending turn in the final round before receiving

MIÑOZA, A31

Whether it's the mean exterior or its leather seats that you're looking at, there's so much to admire with the new Ford Escape. This genuine off-roader has a Control Trac 4 4x4 system that lets it go where other so-called SUVs can't. And it's even more impressive in action. Put its 2.3L VVT engine with Drive-by-wire technology to the test and be overwhelmed by its lightning-quick responsiveness, smooth power delivery and superior fuel efficiency.

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Ford
Make Every Day Exciting

Will the basketball tug-of-war end with the Unity Congress? The main players and their take on the controversy:

GO TENG KOK
President, Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP)

THE NEWLY INSTALLED Go Teng Kok, one of the decades-old BAP bar figures in several controversies, recently met with members and officials of the local Olympic family, POC. Conveniently the president of the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association and, needless to say, the president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, Go claims to have "excellent connections" with Filta officials, including former president Gil Cheng Monday of Hong Kong and Filta chief security person Chito Bradio. Chief hosts of Malaysia. Go is one that he is his own man. "I am independent-minded," he says. "So you can declare to me, not even Graham [as BAP-ex gen sec Graham Lee] or [BAP-ex gen sec] Sandiatoi and Lito Montero [vice-

while BAP-bigwigs are quiet who is very close to ang BAP-suggestion Ben Lim], "he says. "I am willing to extend the Unity Congress but they probably don't want me to be there. They CDP officials have not told me about what's there for the BAP to look forward to." Go says he is for basketball unity, but insists on one thing ... even in the SBP he [Jim, "Boss ko" Lim, head honcho ng pakadlopan CDO ng mga, I will never turn my back on him]."

MANNY V. PANGILINAN
President, Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP)

THE VERY INFLUENTIAL MVP seems prone, the reluctant "dark man" in the basketball unification equation. Already he gets costly enemies his lone shot after the latest national basketball federation (it's bad "Bronze" the rendition of the 1950 Pangilinan has returned from Geneva and Rudolph, where he and his group held talks with top Fiba officials, hearing the message of harmony and disconnection. The chair of telecommunications giant PLDT and Smart and managing director of Hong Kong-conglomerate First Pacific is convinced that the Fiba will lift its suspension on the Philippines if the SBP quickly forms Fiba guidelines to the letter. Although the BAP reasons for reconstitution the SBP presidency say Ing Ruiz' he is only a "technical" by-laws in the BAP and has tied Filipinas Basketball Pangilinan is un-

perturbed. The SBP says there is nothing to the Tokyo joint-venture report but hers Pangilinan there being invited as president. Sought team is also announced by reports that the SBP would boycott the Unity Congress. "We can move with some difficulty and even the BAP planning to cast in the contingent," he says. "But we have to stay in accordance. The deep frustrations, is still open for any basis of cooperation with the BAP."

SEN. JINGGOY ESTRADA
Chair, Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP)

THE BASKETBALL-LOVING LAWmaker happily accepts the presidency of the BAP but it seemed by his own look-at-less weeks later relinquishes to create a united front for local basketball with Pangilinan and the SBP-ex Hong Kong. Members of the BAP board server formula of two consulting them and of selling out the interests of the association. But wanting to further rock the boat, the senior decides not to contest his center. "I admit that I decided up my own, but I believe basketball needs some peacemaking unless Liberal will emerge the BAP with PBA," he says. Under the Hong Kong agreement, Estrada will sit as chair of the SBP with Pangilinan as president. Estrada's defacto-consul, Sumaway, comes after the merger — a step further from former BAP president Joey Lina's approval of

confrontation talks with Fiba — which the Fiba desires. Estrada continues to sit as SBP chair in the absence of a formal BAP retraction about his meddling, and is expected to attend today's Unity Congress. "I will go with the congress in contrast who will really help basketball in the country get back on its feet," he says. He is said to be stumped by reports that certain BAP officials are afraid they will lose their jobs once the SBP is fully put in the Fiba mix.

Ali Tarkos scores off China's Bazar Hanbo in the 1982 Asian Games in Busan, South Korea.

Unity Congress today; Baumann hits town

By June Navarro and Francis Delva

A DAY BEFORE THE CRUcial congress that hopes to put basketball stakeholders from all over the country under one roof takes place, Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP) officials finally found a reason to smile.

The country finally has an assurance that it is close to competing in the three-national scene after a massive 23-hour meeting will top officials of the international basketball federation (Fiba), including secretary general Patrick Baumann, who belatedly accepted an invitation to come to Manila and attend the Unity Congress today.

"It is done," said SBA consultant Noli Eala in a text message to the Inquirer early yesterday morning. "Baumann [at Mig 8 Makati]."

Later yesterday Eala, also the official spokesperson of the SBP, held a press conference at the PBA press room and announced the latest developments.

'Work has been done'

Although he did not dwell on the "guts" details of the meeting, Eala said "we think the work has been done and it's time to move forward for Philippine basketball."

A statement from Baumann cleared the air on the SBP's Fiba accreditation.

Eala was part of a five-man group led by BAP chief Manny V. Pangilinan that went to Bangkok to seek an audience with Baumann. The others were Fiba secretary general, Sal Piñas-Artis reinstated Dato 'Seth' Chan Thiek and Fiba-Asia president Shek Saad before the Unity Congress is held today at the Dusit Hotel in Makati.

Pangilinan is expected to be named president in elections that are expected to be course formalized to as far as the completion of the Tokyo accord is concerned.

Also with Eala and Pangilinan in Bangkok were Jaojun Cagimutan, who represented the GAAP in the Philippine Basketball 2XL-organization, SBP lawyer Maricor Abenoza and Fiba diner Ricky Vargas.

Also present were BAP officials Bonifacio Alcantara and DJP Christian Tan, who were heralded into the suite talks by Baumann.

"The three-man panel has been able to agree on the final talking points which will pave the way for the culmination of the Tokyo consensus steps to the unity congress tomorrow (today)," said Eala.

Pangilinan still admitted the success of the trip when the group arrived from Bangkok yesterday morning at Manila.

"There are [it is done], we have unity already," he said also via a text message to the Inquirer. "Let's just wait for Baumann to make the official announcements."

Baumann's presence in the Unity Congress is a sign that the Fiba still finally acknowledge the SBP as the country's national federation for basketball. The decision to put the congress cause after the Bangkok meeting, which started on 5:30 p.m. yesterday ended past 4 a.m. yesterday.

'Lifting of suspension looms'

(Statement of Fiba secretary general Patrick Baumann)

During [the] meeting the Three-Man Panel agreed on all major outstanding issues and agreed to proceed with the Unity Congress on February 5th in Manila.

Piñas and Tiba Asia approved the agreement and fully support the holding of the Unity Congress. With this Unity Congress the role of the Three-Man Panel will have been successfully completed in accordance with the Tokyo Commission and the merger between BAP and PBA is consolidated, resulting into a new national federation for basketball with new structures, leaders and boards.

This paves the way for the official FIBA and Fiba accreditations and for the lifting of the suspension of the Philippines from international competitions.

Pulse of people: What they say about cage row

Compiled by Jasmine W. Payo, June Navarro, Marc Reyes, Francis Delva

BUENA CRELLANA JUNE and captain dominator PBA commissioner Noli Eala dared an official of the Basketball Association of the Philippines to explain the sport's predicament to the people who deserve to know more.

Explain to the Filipino people, in plain Mother tongue, why the Philippines cannot join the [2007] Fiba-Asia Championship," the former broadcaster-reforming in the Fiba unusual sanction that bars the country from competing in international tournaments, including the 2007 qualifier for the Beijing Olympics.

That was almost a month ago.

And turns out, there is, indeed a lot of explaining to do in front of the public, which has grown weary of all the bureaucracy and hogwash now just one thing—the Philippines playing in international competitions.

Both basketball as the sport's

and national sport and pastime of the country, the Inquirer sports staff decided to go around the streets days before today's Unity Congress to ask people from all walks of life what their views are on the issue.

This is what they had to say:

• "The whole mess is no injustice to the players, who I think can make it to the Olympics given enough assistance."—Paolo Luzadas, 22, high school instructor

• "Mahirap na tayong di nakakalaro. Unemployment[?], lapit na yung mas na. Yung mga players natin ang naapektuhan. Mahirap kasi pag pare-pareho ang mga sports leaders, nagkakaigi-ngan dyanita."—Grant Contreras, 21 years old, security guard

• "I'm not even sure if the officials themselves understand the real issue and what is right and what is wrong. But the real thing is that the country is prohibited from fielding teams in international events, which is a major concern for a country that respects sports [basketball]."—Ramon Segovia, freelance video editor

AMES

BAGA

LUCAS

MANGUAN

ASUELA

LAZCANO

• "This is a sport that most Filipinos love. I think most have been to the Olympics, at least local ones. On the SBP's effort to stop the congress from happening, they should stop thinking about their selves and [see] the real interest."—Nicanor Cruz, 66, basketball fan and homecoming official.

• "I think basketballers are not willing to really get into the details of the issue but would rather see things fix themselves and see the country taking part in Southeast Asian Games, Asian Games and even the Olympics. It's a pity because we have the best players nowadays to represent the country."—Napoleon Baga, senior citizen

• "I'm tired of reading these athletes in the newspaper. I want something more concrete like seeing the national team play in Southeast Asian Championships again."—Mario Mendoza, 37, production manager of a Makati-based PR firm

• "The warring parties in basketball should set their priorities right, especially the SBP. Go away from the Olympics and Asian Games and move to make the countries FIBA [joint basketball ties promulgate by submitting their national team rosters against the best of the world."—Alan-Dan Pedro, 27, area manager (Manila), Sharp Philippines Inc.

• "Wala na dapat pangagamitan ng pera. Di dapat sana 'DJ' na ang mga ligang may play-on na dapat mag-represent ng Pilipinas sa international competitions."—Jan Lester Blanjaca, 18, student

• "I just hope the SBP finally sees the light and recognizes which group really benefits basketball. I just want to see our players play in international competitions. So whichever, we might even get to play in the Olympics."—Wenie Lazo, 31, president and CEO www.manilastandard.com

• "The BAP has performed below par for so many years and I just can't imagine that the people running it will have the guts to say that they are the top country's basketball entity when obviously they are not. The SBP should find a way or face the wrath of the 93 Fiba members."—Briany Aleo, 38, general manager of Solar Telecommunications Inc. Inc. and president and CEO of game fans.ph

• "SBP must also exercise the power they have to set things straight because they have the powerful leagues behind them like the PBA, PBL, UAAP and NCAA."—Joel Salvosa, game promoting/business owner.

• "We're probably the laughing mock of the international but behind community, unable to agree over anything somehow solve the problem. Maybe Manny [Pangilinan] and [Jinggoy] Estrada should take."—Edmund Espina, 33, human resources practitioner

• "The issue has been going on for almost two years, maybe one leaders have lost the capacity to resolve the issue among themselves."—Alexander Servidad, Bangkok-based language teacher

• "The SBP should continue reaching out while the BAP should join the unity congress, respect the proceedings and prove what it is a sovereign player."—Jonathan Espina, 31, registered sales training ed of a leading electronics manufacturing company

• "We should give new faces a chance so as to assist Philippine basketball just like Chot Reyes who just wouldn't do well at it, like Go Teng Kok and his group."—Jun Agcaoli, 36, writer

• "I really haven't the foot that Filipinos hate that habit of sending their best to public. [Those basketball officials] only have vested interests."—Aga Jose, 32, English instructor

• "I agree with Fiba banning us from international play. We're not united and we are not acting body dealing with our basketball affairs. Unless it's stupid that look sales are bickering about it until now."—Brian Gomez, 28, hotel/restaurant owner

• "FICE officials are right when they said that the SBP officials are intelligent enough to handle the situation."—Jeanne Abiar, 27, PR practitioner

Government Warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

Final round scores:

-10 Frankie Miñoza (74-67-67-71)
-10 Harold Mundo (73-71-71-69)
-9 Jay Bayron (68-73-70-72)
-9 Ronnie Magallanes (71-71-71-67)
-8 Dennis Orcullo (71-71-69-72)
-8 Jonathan Fernandez (71-71-69-72)
-8 Jeffrey Fabian (71-71-69-72)
-8 Ryan Ishii (72-71-69-71)
-8 Jay Bayron (68-73-70-72)
-8 Tony Lascuña (70-69-72-72)
-8 Joey Rayson (68-73-70-72)
-8 Jason Domingo (71-70-70-72)
-8 Paul Jarvinen (69-74-69-72)
-8 Ronnie Magallanes (71-71-69-72)
-8 Ryan Ishii (72-71-69-71)
-8 Jay Bayron

Bryant outshines Arenas

Lakers star powers LA past Washington Wizards

WASHINGTON—KOBE BRYANT won his much anticipated rematch with Gilbert Arenas, scoring 39 points to lead the Los Angeles Lakers over the Washington Wizards, 116-101, in the NBA on Saturday.

Bryant made 14 of 26 shots, was 9-of-10 from the free throw line and had six rebounds and six assists to set motivator for the Lakers, who highlighted the Isabel's All-Star—their but he mostly helped his team move with a steady performance that overcame the crowd at Arena.

Arenas came 4-for-20 from the field and finished with 17 points, mainly because he was 10-for-13 from the free throw line.

Deshawn Stevenson added 17 points, and Caron Butler had 13 for the Wizards, who are 0-2 since Antawn Jamison's injury.

Jaamila Parker scored 20 points, Lamar Odom had 19 points and 11 rebounds, and Andrew Bynum finished with 12 points and 13 rebounds for the Lakers.

In other games, it was New York 99, Orlando 86; Charlotte 95, Golden State 93; Indiana 130, Memphis 119; Miami 113, Milwaukee 96; New Orleans 87, Houston 79; Dallas 94, Minnesota 93; Utah 108, Phoenix 103; Sacramento 94, Denver 87; Chicago 88, Portland 86.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Raymond Felton scored eight of his 22 points in the fourth quarter and Gerald Wallace added 21 points and 16 rebounds to lead Charlotte over Golden State.

Felton, forced to play a lot at shooting guard after Derek Anderson left with a sprained right ankle in the first quarter, blew it all 10 for the Bobcats, who won despite shooting 41 percent and getting outrebounded by seven.

Baron Davis had 21 points, Al Harrington added 17 and Andris Biedrins had 15 points and a career-high 16 rebounds for the Warriors.

In Orlando, Florida, Eddy Curry hailed his way to 27 points, reserve Channing Frye added 16, and New York ended control early and held on to beat Orlando.

Stephon Marbury had 19 points and six assists for New York, which held Orlando to just 37.7 percent shooting.

Backup center Eddie Mihich led the Magic with a career-high 19 points. Dwight Howard added 15 points and 11 rebounds. Hedo Turkoglu had 12 points, but hit only four of 13 shots.

In Phoenix, Mehmet Okur scored 30 of his 29 points in the second half, including a decisive 19-footer with 2.1 seconds remaining, and Hakim Warrick added 20 points and 10 rebounds for Utah.

Deron Williams also scored 20 points and added 10 assists for the Jazz, who have handed Phoenix three of its 10 losses this season and have won four straight against the Suns overall.

In Milwaukee, Dorsey Wright capped his special weekend with 32 points and 11 assists, and Jason Kapono added a career-high 28 points to lead Miami past Milwaukee.

Wade, who went 11-of-17 from the field, also extended his franchise-best streak of consecutive games with at least 20 points to 34 and added seven rebounds and seven assists.

Wade's performance trumped Mo Williams' career-best 26 points on 10-of-14 shooting that led five players in double figures for the Bucks, who have lost four in a row and 11 of the last 12.

Shaquille O'Neal, plagued by foot and ankle trouble, quietly had 20 points in 26 minutes for Miami, which got two points from newcomer Udonis Haslem.

In Dallas, All-Star point guard Josh Howard and center Terry Rozier had 22 points and Dallas held on to win its 15th straight home game.

Kevin Garnett was in early foul trouble and didn't get his first rebound until midway through the third quarter. The former MVP went on to grab 12 rebounds to go with his 20 points—16 in the fourth quarter. That still wasn't enough to keep Minnesota, which lost for the ninth time in 11 games.

In Portland, Oregon, Ben Gordon scored 15 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter to help Chicago defeat Portland for its second straight road win.

Zach Randolph had 27 points and seven rebounds to lead the Blazers, who had a four-game home winning streak snapped.

NBA TOUGH ON BASKETBALL

Source: Via Chapters on Toronto Complex (8 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.)

WASHINGTON'S Gilbert Arenas (left) engages Los Angeles' Kobe Bryant in a chase for the loose ball.

SHAQUILLE O'Neal (dark Earthjokes during a lull in their game.

Hingis trips foe, claims Pacific title

TOKYO—SECOND-SEEDED MARTINA Hingis overpowered Anastasia Zakharova, 6-4, 6-2, on Sunday to win a women's Hills Pan Pacific Open title.

Hingis, who lost to Elena Dementieva in the final here last year, rolled on solid ground strokes on her way to the straight-sets win over the 19-year-old Zakharova.

"I'm very proud of my record here," said Hingis. "I knew going into today's match that I could make the record if I won."

Hingis previously won this tournament in 1997, 1999, 2000 and 2002 and was tied with Lindsay Davenport for the most titles here before Sunday's win.

It was Hingis' first Tier I singles title since winning in Rome in 2006. AP

MARTINA Hingis celebrates a point.

SUPER BOWL

Colts entrust hopes in hands of QB Manning

MIAMI—PEYTON Manning will lead the high-powered offense of the Indianapolis Colts against the Chicago Bears' swarming defense when the two teams square off in Super Bowl XLI on Sunday.

The 29-year-old Manning, a widely considered to be the best quarterback in the NFL but has built of future biography is mostly lacking a Super Bowl victory.

Indianapolis coach Tony Dungy said Manning "means to play well every time out."

"I don't think he looks at this as a do-or-die moment," Dungy told reporters. "He looks at it as a big game we need to win.

"I don't think he's treated it any differently and I think he's pretty much the same guy I've seen for the last five years."

If the Colts (13-4) are going to win their first Super Bowl since the franchise moved from Baltimore before the 1984 season, they will have to dominate one of the NFL's best defenses.

Led by combative linebacker Brian Urlacher, the Bears' defense has been rejuvenated in the 1985 squad that had two playoff shutouts before whipping the New England Patriots 46-10 in Super Bowl XX in New Orleans.

Chicago (13-5) beat Seattle in the divisional game 27-24 and whipped New Orleans 39-14 in the NFC title game. The 29-year-old Urlacher said he was not worried that both teams were able to secure the ball.

"It doesn't concern me," he said. "The big one I look at is wins and losses. We were both of those games so yards don't mean anything. Points win games. We make plays—that's our focus."

Urlacher said he was going to get twice Indianapolis RB retiree Hebi Carmouches to give a pep talk to his team before the game.

"I wasn't here to address the team; a little bit about what it means to win the biggest game in your sport," he said. "And he's also a Colts fan. So it will be a non-win situation for us."

Reuters

MANNING

Els says he's ready for Tiger this time

DUBAI—ERNIE ELS PLEDGED TO MOVE furiously and nimbly on Sunday to repel any challenge from old nemesis Tiger Woods in the final round of the Dubai Desert Classic.

The big South African will take a three-stroke lead over the American into the last 18 holes and that is five fewer off than last year when he ultimately lost to Woods in a playoff.

On that occasion he closed the gap with a tremendous final round only to lose at the first hole of a sudden death playoff.

That still rankles with Els and he made no bones about his will to come up trumps this time around in what would be a huge boost to his confidence in the year ahead.

"I'm up for it. I'm really looking forward to it and I'd like to win it pretty badly. I'm in it for the long haul," he said after firing a four-under-66 in his third round.

"Tiger could get hot at any time so I'll be watching the leaderboard. There are other players obviously, but you've got to watch the number one player in the world."

In fact there are three players bunched between Woods and Els to joint second, two shots off the pace and all three have their chances as well of pulling off what would be a major upset.

Sweden's Fredrik Stenson is based in Dubai and knows the Majlis course as the Emirates Golf Club well, although he was complaining of tiredness after his third round.

Ajeet Randhawa of India has bounced back to form in a big way this week and is taking inspiration from compatriot Jeev Milkha Singh who won the prestigious Volvo Masters in Spain last year.

Ross Fisher of England, meanwhile, has been the revelation of the tournament leading after the first two rounds and earning warm praise from Els after they shared a round on Saturday.

Four more Swedes—Alexa Stark, Peter Hanson, Joakim Haeggman and Robert Karlsson—are still in the hunt, while Thailand's latest discovery, Prom Meesawat, is springing his latest dream-to-reality campaign.

But it will be all eyes on Woods as he looks to build on his win for the Tenth International in California last Sunday—his first tournament of the year. AFP

RODNEY Jones (left) lands a punch in the face of Cory Spinks in their IBF junior middleweight championship bout. Spinks, however, won the fight.

Diaz wrests IBF crown; Spinks keeps belt

EDGEWATER, FLORIDA—(HEADLINE) Chad Dawson won the WBC light heavyweight title Saturday, handing defending champion Tomasz Adamek of Poland his first professional defeat.

"This was a long time coming," said Dawson, noting he had trained extremely hard the past several weeks for the fight. "I reached my potential in that fight."

Dawson's left-handed style, quickness and reach was too much for Adamek during much of the boxing fight. The boxer-puncher improved to 23-0 with the unanimous decision in the 12-round bout.

"He was much quicker than I was. I lost," Adamek said through an interpreter.

Earlier, Julio Diaz took the IBF lightweight title when defending champion Jesse Chavez tumbled early in the first round after his right knee buckled while avoiding a punch. Also, Cory Spinks defended his IBF junior middleweight title with by outpointing Rodney Jones in an uneventful contest without any knockdowns.

But the most gruesome knockout was between fighters was easily the best battle.

Adamek, who took a beating for much of the contest, rallied in the 10th round, sending Dawson to the floor with a right to the nose and he topped on the attack through the 11th.

Dawson, wearing shiny red, white and blue trunks, sent the Polish fighter to the canvas with a minute left in the seventh round with a left hand to the stomach and appeared on his on his way to finishing Adamek (30-1).

"That was a slip," Adamek said. "I was tripped."

"It was a difficult fight because he was fast—the fastest I've every faced Adamek said. "He had good footwork and speed."

Diaz (34-1) was crashed safely his 25th knockout when Chavez—who was wearing a brace on the knee—could not get up, just 22 seconds into the third round.

"I thought he had a lot of soul, but I didn't see it tonight," said Diaz, who was already ahead on all three judges' cards. He must've injured himself."

AP

SPORTS

Veterans rule Milo run kickoff leg

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SHANGHAI CITY—FORMER NATIONAL CHAMPION CRESENCIANO Isidal of Sultan Kudarat and Marisol Magallon of Polomolok, South Cotabato, topped the inaugural elimination race of the 31st National Milo Marathon yesterday at Plaza Mabini here.

Isidal, who set the Milo Shanghai 42 kilometer record of 2 hours 11 minutes 33 seconds during the 2003 finals in Manila, completed the 21K course in 1:07:06.

"Kulang ako sa tapang noon. Medo' na rin nadod ko ang kanyang ritmo (I will try to regain the title, which is very dear to me, this year)," said Isidal, who was barely favored to retain the title in the 30th national finals last December but had remained devoted.

He until he tried to break his record and timed 1:08 at the turnaround point but lost steam in the process.

The 28-year-old Isidal, a member of the national training pool, secured a return ticket to the national finals on Nov. 18 along with Johnny Espeña, who was second in 1:13:54, and third placer Jessie Jose, who placed third in 1:12:36.

Magallon retained her leg title with an unchallenged clocking of 1:26:33.

Like Isidal, Magallon proved too much for her rivals. Only six other male runners secondly finished with faster times than her 1:26:33 clocking.

Settling for second and third places in the Cubcraft title were Adjunto delos Santos (1:44:17) and Feliz Simbas (1:47:11).

The top three finishers in the men's 50 run were Marjohn Salamanca (34:30), Alfonso Dasmo (35:49) and Michael Roca (36:30).

The women's 50 run was ruled by Magallon's youngest sister Mary Ann, a first timer who finished the race in 22:41. Placing second and third, respectively were Jackalyn Micard (23:00) and Jenny Monasterio (23:16).

The 3K event for kids was topped by Darella Gomez and Maicon Dichoso in the 12-15 age group and Rainey Fernandez and Marjorie Gayoba in the 6-9 category.

Milo Sports Events executive Pua Gan-ong lired the starting gun for the flagged off 3,950 runners yesterday.

Puerto Princesa in Palawan will host next week's leg.

FORMER champ Crescenciano Isidal crosses the finish line unchallenged.

UAAP SOFTBALL

Unscathed Lady Falcons whip UE

ADAMSON UNIVERSITY OVERWHELMED University of the East in an abbreviated game, 15-2, Saturday to move within two wins of a title sweep in the UAAP softball tournament at the University of Santo Tomas.

The Lady Falcons, unbeaten in six elimination-round games, will have to beat two tough teams, Sisugh—second-running UST at 5 p.m. tomorrow and third-running University of the Philippines on Tuesday—to clinch the crown.

The Tigresses surged in the host with a 17-1 shutout of the Arenas Lady Eagles, also Saturday for their fifth win in seven outings. The Lady Eagles remained winless in seven games.

UP is in third place with a 4-2 win-loss mark, comfortably ahead of the fifth-placed UE has-been (1-5).

In men's baseball yesterday at the Rizal Memorial ball park, Adamson and UST both avenged their round setbacks in Ateneo and National, respectively.

The Soaring Falcons leveled their record to 3-3 by getting back at the Blue Eagles, now also 3-3, in a 4-3 squeaker. The Falcons never allowed the Blue Eagles to draw at least a semblance of their 12-1 rout of the San Marcelinus-based team in the first round.

The Tigers also erased the stigma of their 0-2 loss to the Bulldogs with a 3-2 victory of their own.

The Tigers' fourth win in seven games put them behind title frontrunners and defending champion UP (5-2), but ahead of the Blue Eagles and Falcons who are tied to third place.

NU is in the cellar with 2-5.

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Marist cagers shoot down defending champ Bedans

MARIST SCHOOL RIPPED ON AN INDIANE scoring spree to oust defending champion San Beda Altarilla, 56-13, yesterday and leapfrog into the semifinals of the Cheerlite Tangkad Ranged Basketball Tournament at the Makiling Open Field gym.

Axel Arroyo scored six points in a 15-0 Marist run that erased a 5-11 deficit and gave the Marikina-based defenders the top spot in Group A with a clean 2-0 record.

Marist takes on Jose Rizal-Makati, which qualified in Group D with a 2-0 card in the semifinals.

Jose Rizal-Makati-ayang (4-0) battles International Christian School (3-0) in the other Final Four encounter in the Adidas-backed tournament conceptualized by Cheerlite grocer manager Tom Morenos and tournament director Edmundo "Ito" Badolato and organizer Bernard Dungca.

Clint Villanueva topscored for the Bedans with eight points.

Siso siblings dominate junior tennis

CEBU—HERMAJENE SISO DEMOLISHED TSR Sanchez game of Jacob Lagman, 6-1, 4-2, in the boys' 14-under final and sister Sally Mae Siso routed Claudia Tabuada, 6-1, 6-2, for the girls' title at the close of the 2007 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop at the Casino Español Tennis Club Saturday.

Sally Mae scored a double victory with a 6-4, 6-1 win over elder sister Hallydene Siso in the girls' 14-under finals to underscore the domination of the Siso siblings in the tournament sanctioned by the Philippine Tennis Association Region 7 under vice presidents Inday Fuges.

Kevin Johnson, representing Bayhaq Leyte, edged Hannah Grace Espinosa, 3-6, 6-4, 10-3, for the girls' 12-under championship.

The age-group competitions, organized by CTM, celebrates the 30th year of Milo's involvement in junior tennis.

Hermajene started the tournament with a 6-2, 6-1 upset victory over the favored Jose Hinaloño to gain the quarterfinals in the first weekend.

"That win [over Hinaloño] gave me courage to try new matches," he said. "Jacob is a lefty-lefty, surprisingly he could not play with as much power as before."

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Anti-money laundering coverage to be expanded

AMLC wants lawyers, accountants to be liable too

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES' ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING COUNcil has initiated new measures to oblige lawyers, accountants and other "gatekeepers" of financial deals to play a greater role in the global crusade against dirty money and terrorist financing.

In an interview, AMLC executive director Vicente Aquino said the local watchdog had written the Supreme Court to issue a circular requiring the members of the Philippine bar to comply with the AMLC requirements on suspicious and covered transactions.

He added that the AMLC had similarly written to the Professional Regulatory Commission to oblige certified public accountants to do the same as part of their professional practice.

"We are practically asking for the cooperation of the counsel/institutions to so include the gatekeepers," Aquino said, noting the proposal was in line with recent initiatives being pushed by the Rizal-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) against money laundering.

Money laundering is a crime wherein the proceeds of an unlawful activity are used in financial transactions to make them appear to have originated from legitimate sources.

"Evidently, the FATF has determined that criminals and organized crime groups use lawyers, accountants, casinos, real estate brokers and precious metal dealers in the laundering of their ill-gotten or criminal proceeds," Aquino said.

He said majority of the jurisdictions across the globe were already addressing this concern on gatekeepers and many were already in compliance.

"So that's why we don't want to be a step behind," Aquino said, noting that the AMLC would like the precautionary measures on gatekeepers in place within this year.

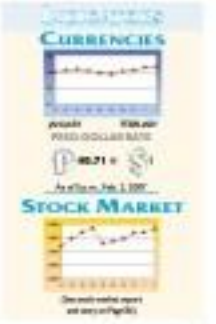
Once covered, the gatekeepers will be required to comply with the same reporting, record-keeping and know-your-customer (KYC) requirements that other covered institutions like banks and other financial institutions were obliged to do.

Philippine law against dirty money allows the government to look into any transaction—whether a single, series or combination—worth at least P500,000, mirror than the previous threshold of P4 million. This gave authorities more leeway to probe suspicious cash deposits and investments, as defined as those "without any credible purpose or origin, underlying trade obligations or assistant."

In the past, authorities had to seek a court order before they are given access to suspicious bank accounts in view of the bank secrecy law.

Asked whether the expansion of coverage would need another amend-

ANTI-MONEY/B4



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Canadian firm keen on investing in Nonoc mine

By Christine A. Gaylican

CANADA CHEMICAL MINE METAL RESOURCES Corp. (CMMR) has expressed interest to invest to be a major investor in the reopening of the Nonoc nickel mine owned by Philnico Industrial Corp. in Surigao province.

This was confirmed by Philnico president Teodoro Norvuez Jr. in a message sent to the business.

Norvuez said a local affiliate, CMMR Resources Philippines Inc., was now conducting due diligence on Nonoc's mineral property.

Since Philnico ended talks with China's Jinchuan Nonferrous Metals Corp., the mining company has started negotiating with four other companies from Chile, Russia and Japan whom Norvuez said "will be given equal opportunities to bid for the project."

In an earlier statement, Norvuez noted nonoc may require $1 billion for rehabilitation. Located on Nonoc island off Surigao City, the nickel mine is touted to hold one of the biggest nickel and cobalt resources in Southeast Asia.

The Nonoc mine, which has about 60 million metric tons in nickel reserves, halted operations in 1982 due to high energy costs.

CMMR is keen to invest $3 billion in a nickel refinery in the Philippines, a ranking official of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau said in another interview last month.

In Asia, CMMR also owns a nickel refinery in China's northeastern province of Jilin and it appears that the company is looking for new material, the nickel ore to feed its mineral process ing plant, the official noted.

CMMR is scouting for a possible ore la cation and its hunt has taken the compa ny to the provinces of Palawan, Zambales and Surigao, said the official, who declined to be named, adding that it was negotiating supply contracts with major nickel miners in the country.

The Philippine government has ex pressed optimism that the domestic industry sector is poised for a boom with planned investment by world players such as Anglo American Plc. and Phelps Dodge Corp. in local projects.

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Banks' dollar cap to be raised to pre-crisis level

By Doris C. Dumlao

AS PART OF A REFORM PACKAGE to liberalize the foreign exchange system, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas plans to raise banks' allowable dollar purchases as a share of unimpaired capital—known as the most-bought limit—to the pre-Asian crisis level of 20 percent.

But the eight-fold increase in the net-bought limit—from the current cap of 2.5 percent of unimpaired capital, or $5 million, whichever is lower—would be matched by a 20-percent limit on the unwound position, or the amount of dollars the banks are allowed to sell to their open-market, banking sources said.

The BSP had already amended some bank representatives on the 20-percent overbought/20-percent oversold formula, banking sources said.

"This is the formula they we're hearing from the BSP itself," one banker said.

According to another banker, many of the local banks are happy about the proposed settings, but some foreign banks think it may still be too tight if the nominal dollar limit will be untapped. Foreign banks' unimpaired capital for local operations is usually much smaller than the big local players.

In an interview, BSP deputy governor for bank supervision Nestor Espenilla Jr. said authorities have yet to finalize the net-bought/oversold limits. But he told reporters it would not be a surprise if the BSP were to restore the ratings were before the Asian currency turmoil erupted in 1997, and if the same cap would be imposed on both the "buy" and "sell" side.

"The limit for other countries in the region] are usually within 20-30 percent, and it's very common that the limit is symmetric," Espenilla said, citing the BSP's study on practices abroad.

The Philippines is the only place where the net-bought and -oversold limits are not equal, he said. This situation dated back to a time when there was a shortage in dollars and thus the overbought limit was tightened, while no cap was imposed on the oversold position.

If the BSP moves to restore the limits to pre-Asian crisis levels, this move should only be taken as a good sign, he said.

"When you start raising it and making it equal [to the oversold limit], that represents a normalization process," Espenilla said. "Our reserves are at very high levels. The balance of payments is strong. We are progressing on fiscal. All of these are signs that we are no longer in crisis mode. If we don't feel we are out of crisis mode, we won't even talk about basic liberalization."

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BOC to require traders to pay through banks

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS, TRYING TO shed off its "corrupt" image, will soon require traders to pay customs taxes through banks, instead of handing over payments directly to BOC personnel.

According to Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales, getting rid of "face-to-face transactions between BOC personnel and traders is one of the measures that the agency intends to carry out to improve revenue collection and ensure proper payment of fees, such as import duties.

Morales said that channeling payments of customs fees through banks would help plug leaks in collection.

The BOC, the government's second biggest revenue earner next to the Bureau of Internal Revenue, collected P398.2 billion in taxes, duties and other fees last year, exceeding the P386-billion official target set for it by the national government.

For performing exceptionally well last year, BOC personnel are entitled to incentives as provided under the Lateral Attrition Law, Morales said.

The law says over-performance in revenue collection merits monetary incentives, while under-performance could lead to demotion or reassignment, if not dismissal.

Although the BOC went beyond its 2006 collection target, the agency could have generated much more had problems such as leaks and smuggling been addressed.

Based on published estimates, the government loses about P300 billion in potential revenue a year due to direct and technical smuggling.

Firms urged to go into production of coco products

By Ricardo W. Domingo

SMALL AND MID-SCALE COMPANIES ARE being encouraged to go into the production of coconut-based sugar and vinegar products to address rising demand, especially in the United States.

According to the Philippine Coconut Authority, Bulilingang town in Misamis Oriental is the only source of coconut sugar exports at present.

Through the Filipino-owned, California-based OMNI Herbal Trading, coconut sugar was able to penetrate the growing US specialty food market.

Developed by the PCA, the product comes from the liquid obtained from the tender unopened buds of coconut, also known as tuba or coconut toddy.

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OMNI Herbal has shipped at least 2000 metric tons to the US while an introductory shipment of one ton-was also sent to South Korea.

Also, Serengeti Foods Enterprise, maker of the "Lola Goodthing" coco-nectar vinegar brand, has made headway in the US market.

SFE makes the classic coco nectar vinegar as well as the "virgin" product which is blended with bottles of vinegar, or the liquid that forms aerobic bacteria and unpasteurized vinegar.

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RP to push air talks with 11 countries this year

By Rica T. Chichioco

THE PHILIPPINES HAS INITIATED air talks with Mexico, Dubai, South Korea, Canada, Russia, Oman and Libya to forge reciprocal air travel agreements, according to an official of the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB).

CAB deputy executive director Ferenze P. Piscocinola said the negotiations would be intensified within the year.

The official said Russian negotiators were expected to be available for discussions within February or March and talks with the other countries would be lined up soon.

The government particularly wants to secure flight frequencies to Oman, Libya and areas in the Middle East.

Presently, only seven countries such as Pakistan because of the large numbers of Filipinos there, he added.

As for Canada and Saudi Arabia, Piscocinola said the talks were initiated at the request of local carriers.

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines wants to fly to Canada and has also signified intentions to fly to Cambodia, while Cebu Pacific intends to increase frequencies to South Korea up to 20 times weekly, Piscocinola said.

Discussions with Russia, meanwhile, are being initiated following the Manila-Cebu Aviation authority's rejection of Aeroflot's request to service the destination with charter flights from Clark and Davao.

The rejection reignited calls for liberalization issues concerning reciprocity, Piscocinola said.

"You cannot the issue of reciprocity is 60,000 because we (CAB) have given permission to Tiger Airways to fly between Mexico and Clark. Asian Spirit has now requested that we start air talks with Mexico," Piscocinola said, adding that other airlines shared the same sentiment that there should be reciprocity on points.

He added that the talks were expected to progress within the year but there are no definite timetable yet because the unsolubility of officials from all sides still being worked out.

PAL wants Canada, Cebu Pacific eyes more Korea flights

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The cost of tax compliance

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Cielito F. Habito

I OFTEN LAMENT AN INHERENT INJUSTICE in our revenue system. Whenever the government needs to raise additional revenues, our tendency is to "penalize" those who already pay taxes faithfully. This is because the approach is usually to impose new taxes, or increase existing ones. Meanwhile, those who have been evading taxes all along largely continue to do so.

On top of that, we make it harder than necessary for good taxpayers to fulfill their duties to a citizen. We burden them with cumbersome forms and documentary requirements, and we put them in such inconvenient offices filing their returns and pay their taxes. Also, to our mystery, it's often the good taxpayers who end up the losers, and this is yet another context in which that injustice plays out. In other words, when it comes to taxes, it can be too costly to be compliant.

Few filers

This probably has significant revenue implications as well. How much potential tax revenues does the government lose because taxpayers find it too much of a hassle to pay their taxes? Of the approximately P2.65 billion estimated by the Department of Finance to be lost annually to tax evasion, a significant part is likely because people simply decided that it wasn't worth the effort to be filing a tax return. This can apply to income taxes, VAT or other forms of taxes for which filing of a tax declaration or return is mandatory. Not surprisingly, only about 2 million income tax returns (ITRs) are filed annually with the BIR, whereas there are about 33 million employed workers in our economy.

To be sure, the bulk of tax evasion is due to people who are determined to conceal their true tax liabilities. This is government's job to go after. But I'm pretty sure that a good number of those who would otherwise want to be good taxpayers end up not living up because it's just too difficult to follow the rules.

Hoops and ladders

What are the things that make it hard to be a good taxpayer? For one thing, an income tax filer often has to go out of his/her way to file an ITR. In their credit, BIR has now made it much easier for fixed income earners whose taxes are withheld by their employers, through the automated filing system where the withholding tax certification can substitute for the ITR. But those with mixed income still need to file an ITR, and can only do it within their designated revenue district, which may not always be the most convenient place for them to do so.

BIR tries to make it easier by setting up filing counters in accessible places like shopping malls. But premiere-based taxpayers like me usually troop to the nearest BIR office, the municipal treasurer's office or an authorized agent bank (AAB). But not all municipal treasurers accept ITRs (online donor!), as I still must at some 12 kilometers to the nearest revenue district office in the next town, to file mine). And the AABs don't make it easy either, often putting boxes and ladders in the way of income tax filers, by inconveniencing who can file and pay taxes with them, and when they can do it.

Transaction costs

The latest taxes one is for complex income is self. Banks had a burden to have to service income tax filers, and the AABs have been engaged in a running argument with the BIR all these years. The banks feel that it is too costly for them to service taxpayers. I've heard an estimate putting it at P1.00 (assuming 5 minutes servicing time) per taxpayer. That, they say, is barely recovered through the "float" they get with the taxpayers' money (i.e. the earnings that could be made from holding the cash prior to remittance to BIR). And for ITR filers who pay little or no cash on top of the tax already withheld by their employers, servicing them is a losing proposition.

The banks also complain of the stiff penalties imposed on them in the event of inevitable occasional errors in accounting and documentation, adding further to the cost of being an AAB. To mitigate some of these problems, the banks have been asking that they be allowed to drastically simplify the forms needed for the bank tax payments, accept tax payments from taxpayers from outside their revenue district, and to go easy on penalties. These issues remain unresolved, as far as I know.

More outlets

A solution would be to permit banks to collect an appropriate service fee when they receive an income tax filer. Surely many taxpayers would not mind paying a little extra for the convenience of filing and paying at their nearest bank. This is the same principle with "beyond convey" that have begun to proliferate, where people can pay their various utility and commercial bills at convenient locations, for a minimal service fee. Perhaps the BIR can widen the option for taxpayers by looking to such additional payment outlets as well. In any case, we owe it to our faithful taxpayers to make it as easy as possible to fulfill a basic duty of citizenship.

The public is invited to the next Ateneo Cielo Whith Economic and Political Briefing to be held on Feb. 15 at the Ateneo Rockwell Campus. For details and reservations, contact Jeanne Tongol at 924-7101 (e-mail jeanne.tongol@gmail.com).

Comments are welcome at chabito@operamail.com.

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Anti-money laundering coverage to be expanded

From page B1

ment of the Anti-Money Laundering Law, Aquino said: "We don't have to go back to Congress by way of legislation because this will be a difficult process. So if we could do it by regulation, we'll do it."

"We want to be in compliance before we are again evaluated by the Asia Pacific Group on money laundering," he said. "We will be in place within the year. We're also meeting the enactment of the anti-terrorism law, which will be of great help to AMLC and other law enforcement agencies," Aquino said.

Countries in the Asia-Pacific are currently under pressure from international watchdogs to step up tighter measures to ensure that the informal remittance system, wire transfers, cash couriers and even non-profit organizations would not be "abused" or "misused" in financing terrorists.

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PNOC-EC eyes secondary offering

By Abigail L. Ho

PNOC EXPLORATION CORP. (PNOC-EC), a government-owned or -controlled corporation, is looking at a secondary offering to increase public ownership of the company to as much as 40 percent within the year.

Pedro Aquino Jr., officer in charge of parent firm Philippine National Oil Co., said only 1.7 percent of PNOC-EC was currently held by the public.

The PNOC-EC board, he said, was planning to hold a secondary offering after the May elections to raise this percentage to as high as 40 percent.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla confirmed this in a separate interview, saying the matter was still under study and that the PNOC-EC board should come up with something concrete soon.

"The secondary offering is still being studied. If it's not economically feasible to PNOC-EC and to the country [to pursue], then it can be pursued," he told reporters.

He said the secondary offering could be separate from the earlier formulated privatization strategy of PNOC-EC, involving the sale of 49 percent of the state firm's 116 percent stake in the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power project.

"We'll continue to consider ways to raise funds to lessen dependence on government guarantees and loans," he said. "PNOC-EC's financial requirements will depend on what projects it will pursue. It will be good if it can be self-sufficient."

Aquino said the prospects of PNOC-EC raising more funds, whether through an equity privatization or via a secondary offering, were good, considering the lucrative development projects it was involved in.

"For example, North Cotabato is already a sure ball because there's the hydrocarbon trade. The chances of finding oil and gas in that area are very high," he said.

He said PNOC-EC should have enough cash to pursue exploration and development activities even without government support.

Also, the PNOC-EC board has to decide whether to retain ING as its financial advisor for the possible secondary offering.

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Metrobank '06 net income seen up 27.7%

By Doris C. Dumlao

METROPOLITAN BANK & TRUST CO. (MBT) remained the country's largest bank as of end-2006, with its consolidated assets rising by 0.4 percent to 1,845.5 billion, the bank's unaudited report showed.

Its closest rival, the Ayala Bank of the Philippine Islands, ended the year with unaudited total resources of P682 billion, 30 percent higher than the resources posted a year ago.

Metrobank also disclosed that its unaudited net income for the parent bank, alone, increased by 27.7 percent to P5.5 billion compared from P4.3 billion in 2005. The bank owns the second largest thrift bank in the country, Philippine Savings Bank, as well as investment house First Metro Investment Corp.

For the same period, MBT posted a consolidated net profit of P9 billion, 8 percent higher than a year ago.

"The economy moved positively last year providing new business opportunities for us. We are happy that the results of our investments have started to kick in. We deliberately focused on attracting new businesses especially in deposits, increasing our corporate lending business, and strengthening our banking operations," Metrobank president Arthur Ty said in a statement.

Metrobank's unaudited deposits increased by 16 percent to P493 billion in 2006 from P424.5 billion in 2005. Consolidated net loans for 2006 were at P276 billion.

"We also explored new approaches to increase our noninterest revenue through new product offerings and expanding our partnerships abroad," Ty explained.

Metrobank's total capital accounts increased to P63.7 billion from P49.5 billion in 2005. Capital-asset ratio is at 9.06, 1 billion with more than P4.6 billion for 2006.

The bank concluded two major capital raising initiatives last year to meet new regulatory requirements, put in safely the Basel II capital adequacy framework.

In the meantime, its best-performing issue decreased to P15.7 billion, or 5.2 percent of the bank's total loan portfolio.

"The expansion of our business was complemented by the strengthening of our balance sheet through the sale of almost P1.6 billion in non-performing assets," Ty said. "This allowed the bank to take on new opportunities more aggressively."

"We are gaining momentum in our growth strategy," said Ty. "The challenge for us now is how fast we can build on our gains and pick up the pace of change."

MBT, which previously acquired Prudential Bank, posted a 21 percent return on average capital of P68 billion and 14.6 percent return on adjusted average equity (including net unrealized adjustment for unrealized gains in available for sale securities) in 2006. Return on assets was 1.7 percent.

PHILAM LIFE

Investment Funds	Net Asset Value Per Unit (NAVPU)		One-Year Return
	01/31/2007	12/29/2006	
Philamlife Equity Fund	1.7140	1.7220	46.70%
Philamlife Fixed Income Fund	1.2642	1.2647	17.1%
Philamlife Dollar Bond Fund	1.2991	1.2999	9.10%
Philamlife Global Bond Fund	1.1870	1.1910	9.30%

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Foreign brokers lord over local bourse

By Desiree L. Luces

FOREIGN-OWNED AND -AFFILIATED STOCK brokers continued to lord it over the local bourse, with seven of them contributing the bulk of value transacted in common shares in 2006.

Latest data from the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) show that these seven firms accounted for a combined 53.02 percent of the total value transacted last year.

The top spot was bagged by Deutsche Regis Partners Inc., which was responsible for 12.24 percent of all stock trades during the year.

The firm—formerly the local unit of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell—is technically classified by the bourse as a local stockbroker, but handles mainly foreign trades from Deutsche Bank's home abroad.

Following in the broker rankings are ING Securities Phils. Inc., which captured 11.16 percent of transactions, and CLSA Philippines Inc. with 8.17 percent.

Standard Assets man JP Morgan Securities (Phils.) Inc. with 6.66 percent of total value traded in 2006, followed by Macquarie Securities (Phils.) Inc. with 6.41 percent of trades.

At catch phrase, ABN-Amro Asia Securities Inc. came in as the strongest local stockbroker, occupying 6.41 percent of value turnover.

The firm has perfected strength in recent years by virtue of its strong distribution network among local investors, making it the favorite broker to handle the domestic portion of stock offerings.

It was followed by Philippine Equity Partners Inc. (PEPI), which handled 3.64 percent of total transactions for the year.

PEPI is the successor to the local unit that UBS Investment Bank (formerly SBC Warburg Dillon Read) sold to Filipino partners in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The firm, however, continues to service mainly foreign accounts.

ABN-Amro Asia Securities (Phils.) Inc. came in at eighth place with a 3.62 percent share of the action.

Locally-owned Wealth Securities Inc. and Astro Equities Inc. rounded out the top 10, having handled 3.14 percent and 2.78 percent of total 2006 turnover, respectively.

Tobin's hypothesis, that 80 percent of trades handled by 20 percent of investors cover two-thirds of all transactions on the PSE—a trend that has held true for most of the periods before us at the 1997 crisis, and returning to the fore this year—foreign funds continue to be the main drivers of the local bourse.

Other firms that landed in the PSE's top 20 rankings for 2006 include Abacus Securities Corp., BPI Securities Corp., IB Equities Inc., RAO Securities Corp., AB Capital Securities Inc., The First Resources Management and Securities Corp., PCIB Securities Inc., EBC Dolphin Securities, SMCB Phils., Inc., Angping & Associates Inc. Inc. and BA Securities Inc.

According to the PSE, P1.146 trillion worth of shares changed hands in 2006.

Index may test 3,300 barrier

INVESTORS MAY TRY to push local stock prices toward an important psychological barrier this week, buoyed by some profit taking from foreign game in the previous week.

In a research note to clients, analysts at AB Capital Securities Inc. said buyers should expect a bearish trend in the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) to continue, but warned that it would encounter "some resistance" at the 3,300 level.

The PSEi ended last week at 3,309.18 points, a 3.3 percent increase over the previous week's close of 3,161.82 points.

Value turnover remained healthy despite the 11.5-point drop in the week-ago.

AB Capital also noted an increase in focus on second-tier firms which have so far lagged the blue chips in terms performance.

Attention will go to property developer Filinvest Land Inc., which will hit stock shares on the exchange on Tuesday as part of its expansion program.

Continuing inflow of funds from abroad—fanning the low interest rate regime of $5 dollar-denominated securities—are expected to propel the local index higher, adding to the recently attractiveness.

Low interest rates in local fixed-income investments are also forcing investors to look at the stock market as an alternative.

"The high interest rates that many investors are seeking to build positions at the wake of recent strong gains," AB Capital said, adding that earnings results from last year would also add to the bullish mood.

"Funds are coming into the market as investors are anxious to get a better return on their savings than is available on money market instruments," the firm said. "Investors are in an upbeat mood about the outcome of upcoming 2006 corporate earnings announcements."

More importantly, many local firms are expected to upgrade their earnings projections for this year on the back of the prevailing positive economic environment of low interest rates and a stronger peso.

One fact backed only, however, Asian Securities Corp. warned investors to be cautious about the coming days.

"Trend lines in the daily chart are pointing deeper and steeper," its technical analyst Lawrence Rodriguez said.

He pegged the PSEi's resistance at 3,331 points and immediate support at 3,247 points.

(Sandra G. Cuevas)

How to count the vote without automation

THE COMELEC HEROES CONSortium of the [illegible] (ONOP) and the Namfrel Precinct Count for Responsible Voting (PCRV) are positioning themselves to watch over the conduct of the May elections. The National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) is gearing up with 2,000 volunteers as the traditional citizens' watchdog. Even the good DE of A and the Bantayan Union (DU) will closely monitor election fraud and violence, whenever this means.

Poll and good. Dust and lie all, let us leave dear, honest and credible elections.

First, is vote buying, crucial to the results? It is one that, in some places, the queue of paranoiacs in front of a candidate's home is longer than the queue of voters at the polling booth. Some 10 years ago, you could buy a vote for 50. Today, the going rate can go as high as P500.

After getting paid at a candidate's home, the same parishioner line up at the opponent's place. So, a candidate buys votes at a deliberate measure. We don't know everybody else is doing it. As a result, most of the vote buying exercise each other out.

What about automation? Isn't information technology the best way to count the votes? Forget automation. Even if we were given 200,000 precincts can be connected to a computer grid. And, even if it can, it will never be foolproof. Some idiot kid in high school can inject a virus and screw their whole system.

So, let us go manual. At the precinct level, the tedious counting of the ballots is well covered by the candidates' own watchers, the PPSW and/or Namfrel, and the mosalimanyan.

It is when the precincts close and the watchers go home and the ballot boxes are brought and canvassed in the dark recesses of the municipal/city treasurer's office where absolute cheating (the notorious dagdag-bawas) begins.

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honorato C. Geneta

To avoid dagdag-bawas, canvassing the results of the precincts should be done in the open. For example, the precincts where I vote, and about 20 other precincts, are all located in a covered basketball court. After the precincts are done, the results should be announced right in the basketball court for all to see. The result of the canvass goes to the city hall for the citywide canvass; the ballot boxes are sent to Comelec.

At City Hall, the citywide canvass should be done in the open for everyone to watch. In theory, the parking lot in front of City Hall is perfect for this open-air canvass. Even the municipal hall of the smallest town has a courtyard large enough to double as a basketball and volleyball courts.

The city/municipal canvass results are sent to the provincial government building, where the provincial canvass should be done out in the open again for everyone to watch.

The provincial canvass results are finally sent to Comelec for the nationwide canvass that is now done in the open.

Canvassing in the open every step of the way should minimize violence. No one will likely shoot his way into an election office if everything is out in the open.

Finally, let us not feel outraged. The Constitution guarantees dozen and honest elections. It can never guarantee that the best man will win.

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HONDA

Net borrowings drop by 54%

₱544.3B in old debts paid

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT's net borrowings last year reached only P387.9 billion, 54 percent lower than year-ago level, as it aggressively pursued debt reduction efforts.

Net borrowing is the difference between the gross liabilities incurred for a period and the amount of previously obtained obligations settled.

Data from the Department of Finance showed that of the P927.8 billion worth of net borrowings last year, foreign debts accounted for P118.6 billion. Some P269 billion in net domestic borrowings were recorded.

According to the BSP data, gross borrowings last year amounted to P832.2 billion while debts that were paid in the same period reached P544.3 billion. The bulk of the borrowings was used to pay existing obligations.

The P544.3 billion spent by the government to pay off liabilities was 64 percent higher than the P279.1 billion recorded in 2005.

The finance of the Treasury (RM) last year engaged in debt swaps in line with the government's debt and liability management strategy. Under a debt swap, the government obtains fresh borrowings with lesser interest and uses them to settle more expensive debts incurred earlier.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the debt swaps were a prudent exercise as it helped the government save on borrowing cost. He said the government saved about P18 billion last year because it reduced cost of borrowings brought about by the debt swaps.

In the meantime, the BSP last year posted an income of P320 billion, exceeding its target of P92.39 billion.

The BTr's income is composed of earnings from investments in dollar-denominated securities and the dividends collected from state-owned firms.

Cruz said that aside from engaging in debt swaps in boost the cost of government borrowings, the BTr also strengthened the monitoring of dividends remittances by state-owned firms.

THE 16 PERCENT projected increase in the value of stocks this year pales in comparison to last year's 43 percent.

UBS sees muted market growth in '07

By Dustin L. Lucas

PHILIPPINE STOCKS REMAIN attractive and are expected to rise further this year, although not on the extent seen in 2006, according to a major market player.

In a press briefing, UBS chief country representative Laura Ilagan-Ilt said her firm was "very optimistic" on the country's macroeconomic numbers despite the uncertainties posed by the upcoming national elections.

"We see the powerful bunch exchange) index at 3,000," he said.

UBS' target represents a 16-percent average increase to the value of local stocks tallied on the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEI) from last Friday's close of 1,269.16 points.

This year's expected increase, however, pales in comparison to the 42-percent rise experienced by the broad market in 2006, as the government's successful fiscal reforms made investors take notice of the local economy's resurgence.

Despite expectations of a 'muted' 2007, Ilaja said foreign fund managers would continue flocking to the country's financial system, especially the equities market.

"Investors continue to favor the Philippines," he said. "They like our macro story."

Ilaja heads the local operations of UBS Investment Bank – a unit of Swiss banking giant UBS AG – and its brokerage firm, which posted the second-largest value of trades on the PSE last year.

Having underwritten three large initial stock offerings in January alone – mainly by pushing local clients to its foreign clients – UBS is keenly interested in helping businesses the local stock market against selling by investors who may want to cash in last year's gains.

Ilaja also said the underwritings for the P3.9-billion share offer of Villar Land Inc., UBS was also chosen to handle the placement of P111 million worth of treasury shares sold by Alveric Equity Ventures, as well as a P13-million "sell-down" by a large foreign stockholder of First Gen Corp.

Ilaja said "strong demand" marked the flotation deals.

"It was successful despite the market's sharp correction [two weeks ago]," he said.

Investors are still hungry for Philippine papers."

According to officials of the foreign brokerages, the only possible factor that may dampen investor in the foreseeable future is the upcoming national elections in May which may cause some worry particularly among government spending.

Most market watchers, however, have already factored in this possibility in their investment decisions. In fact, some increase in infrastructure spending will be welcomed by foreign investors since the move would help pump prime the economy.

Greenfield AutoPark
Steering towards the future of business

Nurturing and contributing to the burgeoning local manufacturing and light industry business growth is the Greenfield AutoPark (GAP), a sprawling 95-hectare industrial park located within the pioneering Greenfield City in Santa Rosa, Laguna. The industrial estate is the home of Ford Motor Company in the Philippines, still it aims to become a strategic base of manufacturing plants, telecommunication, information technology and other light industry firms.

Greenfield AutoPark's vast area is perfectly suited for such major industrial and manufacturing companies with its world-class, superior infrastructure and communication facilities. Its prime ideal location within the metropolitan community of Greenfield City places Greenfield AutoPark within the country's new and vital growth center of Sta. Rosa. Ever accessible to major transportation routes through 3 major road networks in the south: Sta. Rosa-Tagaytay, Manggahan, and Alfi Greenfield Interchanges.

Its strategic location also means close proximity to business support facilities such as the bustling Paseo de Santa Rosa commercial complex and other commercial centers, telecommunication facilities, financial institutions, and even educational and academic centers. Greenfield AutoPark itself is spacious, eco-friendly environment, according to business with nearby residential areas, hospitals, hotels, and community amenities.

More importantly, locators at Greenfield AutoPark are granted incentives from the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), ensuring valuable financial and operational support for these firms. The continued growth of the economy rests on the sustainability of both multinational and homegrown industries providing countless jobs to Filipino workers, and with the escalating growth of manufacturing, assembly operations, and light industries in Greenfield AutoPark, it is definitely the location of choice for the future of business in the Philippines.

For more information on Greenfield AutoPark and Greenfield Development Corporation, please call 5548GREEN (47336); email sales@greenfield.com.ph or log on to www.greenfield.com.ph.

BUSINESS Monday

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Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Reyes

Survey shows RP business confidence high

By Amy R. Remo

Philippines can be 'heart' of Asia, P & A says

SE 2007 UNSEEN IN, LOCAL BUSINESS owners have become more optimistic with their outlook on the country's economic prospects, according to a poll of Philippine emerging high industries and sectors.

According to initial findings from the Grant Thornton International Business Report (IBR), formerly called International Business Outlook Survey (IBOS), the Philippines ranks second among 35 major world economies in terms of optimism on the economy over the next 12 months.

The IBR, an annual poll which covers the optimism of about 7,200 business leaders in 33 countries, was released by accounting and tax advisory firm Punongbayan & Araullo, the Philippine member firm of Grant Thornton International.

The survey examines the attitudes, plans and trends among business owners.

Optimism level on the Philippines' economy has significantly strengthened to +56 percent from last year's +39 percent. The figure is the percentage balance of the respondents who are optimistic less those who are pessimistic.

Another significant factor behind this confident outlook is the upsurge in the Philippine stock market index (Phisix), which experienced 40-percent increase in 2006 alone, outperforming all key Asian bourses except that of Jakarta's.

India (+97 percent), Mainland China (+85 percent) and Singapore (+84 percent) join the country in the top four positions in the survey.

According to Tony Hudgens, principal for corporate finance of P&A, the dominance of Asian countries in the optimism survey is clearly indicative of the countries that are best positioned to be competitive in the face of increasing globalization.

As early as 2005, in a roadshow entitled "Philippines in Transition: New Business Models," the bank has already outlined the roles that India, Philippines and China would play in the global market in the years to come.

"I remind Peter Drucker's position before his demise that China will be the 'factory' of Asia and that India will be the 'brains,' with its lock on high-end outsourcing and programming," says Hudgens.

"I say the Philippines is positioned to be the 'heart' of Asia, with strengths in BPO-driven services—hence, our superlative of caregivers, seafarers, artistry and chefs," he explains. "This is also why we are now in a good position to market ourselves to medical tourists and retirees."

Hudgens adds: "Although the expected moderation in the global market may initially difficult since we had to position

[JUMP TO B2-1]

SMART 888 brings festival revelers free Internet

Revelers painted themselves black in the spirit of celebration, reminiscent of Iloilo's original inhabitants, the Ati-ati of Panay, and their subsequent conversion to Christianity. Their tan painted skin was an arresting sight against the splash of color from g-strings and costumes made out of indigenous materials like woven sedum leaves, kachi and oversize palm fronds.

Smart was on the thick of festivities, supporting nearly all the participating tribes in the Ati-Atihan competition. Each performing tribe made its Dinagyang mark giving their all in honoring the Sto. Niño through colorful props and costumes, passionate dance choreography and blissful drama (will delivered to the amazed crowd. First runner up winner Tribu Pagladat of La Paz National High School proudly wore the Smart Buddy colors as they wowed the crowd with their energetic performance.

Smart also made sure the Dinagyang weekend was packed with special promos, giveaways and the latest in mobile technology and connectivity as it released its products and services to revelers all over the festival grounds giving them an extra touch of excitement and fun during their Dinagyang experience. The SMART Buddy SIM for example, went for as low as P99 with a free P12 Prindo card. Lovers also received Labas Text 30 and 20 and the All Talk 30 special Iloilo package, which allowed prepaid subscribers to make 3 calls of up to 3 minutes each for only P30.

SMART volunteer employees give a helping hand

SMART also gave the revelers another reason to celebrate through Smart BRO – the telecom giant's wireless broadband service. Revelers were placed everywhere giving them a chance to surf the web for free as they enjoyed the fiesta. The number of festival spectators expanded beyond Iloilo City since the weekend event was disseminated via web cameras and broadcasted over the Internet making the Dinagyang experience more memorable than ever. Smart subscribers with 3G-capable phones also took their part in spreading the festive fly-crafting of Smart's wireless connectivity services.

Bringing also sampled Smart's newest service, the high-speed downlink packet access (HSDPA) through a booth setup at the Iloilo Plaza. Subscribers on the parade route enjoyed viewing 3G-HSDPA coverage all over the major streets of Iloilo City. Smart also launched a preview of being the new 3G-HSDPA capable phone, the Motorola V3XX, first pocket Smart Gold Plus 3300. Those who subscribe to a Smart Infinity Plus 3000 or 4000 until April 15 also get a chance to win a sunset cruise in Boracay or a raffle.

Pasalamat fiesta venue the Iloilo grounds as SMART adds color to Dinagyang

Smart went beyond everyone's expectations as they put together the Dinagyang Smart Buddy Ang Saya concert featured the artist Piso Quinzon artists was a highlight of the Dinagyang weekend. The show featured popular musical performances Hale, Sugarbliss, and Philippine Idol winner Jay Glasgow who performed amazingly at him and crowds gathered to cheer and applaud the artists taking the spotlight. The crowd further encored as SMART raffled out thrilling prizes such as appliances, mobile phones and other premium items definitely putting the icing on the cake.

"Cooperation is among of the groups involved was the key to the success of Dinagyang," said Iloilo Dinagyang Foundation Executive Director Boy Jimeno. "We really appreciate SMART's contribution in helping us make the Dinagyang Festival live up to the distinction of being the best tourism event in the Philippines, as acknowledged by the Association of Tourism Operators in the country. SMART has been supporting the Dinagyang Festival for so many years already. This kind of support has helped us give the Dinagyang Festival the kind of national recognition it now enjoys."

Celebrities and musicians wow the crowd during the Fiestang Smart Buddy Ang Saya concert

Eager customers avail of SMART's enticing promos, products and services

SMART TAYO

Nagkakaisa sa pagbibigay ng serbisyong tunay.

Why are we always lacking in national unity?

Can a western democracy solve the economic problems of a poor nation?

JUST OVER 37 YEARS AGO, THE GRAND and and business leader of the Philippines, Manching del Rosario, asked me to join him in organizing the Management Association of the Philippines. I cannot decline an invitation when another distinguished diplomat and business leader, Ambassador Brei del Rosario, asked me to speak on what MAP can do organizations and NGO members as individuals can do to help improve the economic and social condition of our country.

Most most of you are professional managers, I thought I can be frank—and maybe too frank and naive—in my remarks today which will be a series of questions where I may not have the answers.

We are off to a good start in 2007. International confidence in the Philippines has improved, budget deficit and interest rates are down, inflation is under control, the stock market, business profits and foreign exchange reserves are up, two result of these favorable factors and, with the weakness of the dollar, the peso, together with other currencies, has strengthened.

MAPping THE FUTURE

Washington

E. SyCip

Aside from consumer goods and cabinet fees, remittances from Filipinos abroad are increasing and are now going into apartments and houses. This, together with the office space requirements of "outsourcing" companies, have created a minor boom in construction.

GNP growth rates in 2006 were satisfactory but, as in the US, the upper income and better educated citizens have benefited more in 2006 than the lower group.

Credit should go to President Macapagal-Arroyo for being willing to push through economic measures that may not add to popularity but which are necessary. The major Chinese financial infrastructure and agricultural projects signed last week, there is reasonable hope that, in the next four years, economic growth can seep down to the bottom

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Asia from consumer goods and cabinet fees, remittances from Filipinos abroad are increasing and are now going into apartments and houses. This, together with the office space requirements of "outsourcing" companies, have created a minor boom in construction.

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and powerful elite, should be immune from the rule of law. Asian societies have the external trappings of modernity: a parliament, courts, but the culture is very feudal. One of the saddest cases in Southeast Asia is the Philippines. On the surface, the Philippines is openly democratic, but culturally it's still very feudal, still a few families control most of the wealth of the country. The people in the very bottom have no avenue to grow and develop except to go overseas and work as foreign workers.[1]

Roots of the problem

Are we willing to see the unpleasant roots of our problem? In the leading newspapers of our country, let me raise three questions with you:

1. About 50 years ago most of Asia and the Western world thought that the Philippines, as the only Christian and democratic developing nation in this region, would forge ahead of our neighbors, with only Japan ahead of us? We were the most promising nation in East Asia.

If the success of a good nation is judged by relating skills to reduce poverty, improve education, provide decent health care and housing for most of our people, then we have miserably failed as compared to our neighbors.

With a talented and intelligent population, we are widening economic gaps between the rich and the poor, declining standards of education, a battle against poverty can, and continued migration of the young to what they see as countries that have more opportunities for them.

What are the roots of our problem? Is it an overdose of democracy, Marcos's style? When most countries tell their voters, do we not have a democracy of the upper class who have the money to buy the votes?

Economic freedom with effective enforcement of laws and long term planning for needed infrastructure has been the success story of East Asia. Political freedom gradually increased as income levels rose. The widely praised four "tiger economies" of Asia all had authoritarian governments that were able to eliminate fatigue and increased spending on education. Elements of democracy came naturally with a growing middle class.

Taiwan's growth was under martial law and South Korea developed under a military dictatorship. Prosperous Hong Kong and Singapore do not seem to be suffering from a lack of democracy. In fact both governments and citizens admire the discipline of Singapore!

I want to make it clear that I am for democracy but food, education, housing and health care for the poor should have first priority. Compare the Philippines with the US presidential system, and India with the British parliamentary system, with our neighbors and China. Both the Philippines and India are way behind in infrastructure—water, power, highways, airports, etc. India, in spite of Bangalore and Hyderabad, is way behind China in literacy rate, life span of its people, calorie intake, per capita income and any other economic indicator you can think of!

The Philippines was once ahead of our neighbors. Now we are behind Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, all of whom had not been followers of the economic model of development which puts its emphasis on political freedom.

Perhaps, we rarely use a Western democracy, may pose as the poor Indonesian per capita income has declined after three weak presidency elected under a democracy praised by the West!

I ask you—has Western democracy been an asset or liability for poor nations in this region?

2. As we know, the success and failure of your organization depends on your business relationships. Some of your people have told me how you motivate them, how you train them and how you choose leadership. Isn't this also true of countries?

You are probably aware of the declining per capita spending in our public schools. ... U.S. of Malaysia and ... of Singapore. Are you not worried about public schools without desks and books with poorly paid school teachers?

Only a few of our dedicated teachers can be recognized by Meralco's annual search for outstanding teachers. While scholarships to the poor are needed, should we not also devote to funds that will improve teaching? Should we not ask students from wealthy families to pay full cost tuition at state educational institutions where parking space for cars is often the problem?

Should we not encourage churches to be used as school houses in towns where many public schools have no chairs and even no books? Should late schools not be replaced by engineering subsidy?

Brother Del Rosario, Ramon Jr., recently appointed the Philippine Business for Education, to focus on the problems of education. Should all of us, the private sector and government, not spend more time and money on education?

Neglecting the many problems of education, of high dropout rates, poor teaching of Math, Science and English is like slowly committing national suicide! But easy we solve our education problem, which affects your future and your children's future, without throwing pops, down growth? And isn't that also tied up with the problem of improving health among the poor?

3. Only recently you saw figures that our population has reached 88 million and where new jobs are behind population growth. In spite of many job seekers going abroad, our unemployed and underemployed continue to increase. The population explosion is not taken care of by the school system and by our poor infrastructure.

Pining Isitan, who could have been a Philippine Lee Kuan Yew, was greatly respected for his work at the UN on managing population

Survey shows ...

From page B2-1

ency from manufacturing, it is our natural niche. Remittances from our overseas workers are now fueling growth in light industries, schools, SPEs and call centers, basic services, affordable consumption and lastly, mid-level to affordable properties."

Based on a trend data, optimism in the Philippine has been rising steadily.

Since the Philippines first participated in the BBI in 2000, business executives were slightly hypersensitive with a balance of -1 percent this parity to the country's flagging investment sector.

In the following year however, the Philippines posted a +1.63 percent balance, as local business executives expressed a moderate leap in confidence in the economy. The present-age ans were higher than the global average then of +4.1 percent.

Although the country's growth then was modest compared to its Asian neighbors, the Philippines' GDP growth for the 2000-2001 feeling to 2005 saw a perceptible acceleration.

The 2006 BBI survey shows that businesses in 29 out of 33 countries are optimistic about their economy's performance in 2007 with 24 being more optimistic than last year.

And while, this continued to be the driver of global confidence, for the first time in its 10-year history, the upcoming optimism has considerable chasm the European Union (EU), it a balance of +46 percent, to be more optimistic than the EU, at a balance of +134 percent.

According to the report, the findings reflect the growing confidence of CEOs in their own countries, in particular Germany +66 percent (+41 percent in 2006), Russia +30 percent (+1 percent in 2006) and Italy +31 percent (-8 percent in 2006).

The annual BEI conducted by international membership organization Grant Thornton International, building on the European Business Survey which it ran from 1993 to 2005. The research was conducted by Experian Business Strategies Ltd. and Market Information.

What SM does beyond the walls of its malls

By Margie Quimpo Espino

HISTORY HAS SHOWN THAT after numerical successes in life, some men and women go to the next level of their lives, which is philanthropy.

Of course there are others like Anita Roddick of The Body Shop, who capitalized on their social causes to grow their business boundary-less.

But for many successful people, the last rung of the success ladder is giving back to society some of the wealth and success it has given them.

For Jaipuri Henry Sy, builder of the vast SM empire, payback time started over 20 years ago in 1985 when he set up the SM Foundation.

Except for a few press releases, the foundation has been low profile compared to others.

Foundation officials, however, say its activities and their activities is much higher in the provinces than in Metro Manila.

The foundation provides help to several sectors: Education, health, build-based outreach and the religious.

There is only one criteria for their education programs—that these be given to **TAIPAN Henry Sy and wife Felicidad always attend the graduation of their scholars.**

YSP shows kuits and after photos how students hold classes before SM built a schoolhouse.

formation technology, accounting and the academic. Some of the graduates are employed by SM firms, others are working abroad.

Each scholar is given free tuition, and school fees, and monthly allowance.

In a country where only 20 out of 99 fourth year high school students go to college, the foundation's contribution is significant.

Take one of the foundation's board of trustees members—Grace Angelo and Connie Angeles...recently met with the trustees to talk about their work. They say they feel it's time for the SM Foundation to transport some of its works so the Sy empire has received criticisms about not helping society.

Which Henry Sy himself shuns, leaving the foundation and eldest daughter Tessie Sy as one of the members, to discover solace the foundation is well supported by the seniors.

Angelo says one percent of the profits of each SM company goes to the foundation, "so we have no problem with funding."

Over the past 14 years, Henry Sy and with Felicidad made it a point to attend every graduation of the scholars who came from NCR, Baguio, Batangas, Laoreta, Laguna, Cavite, Pampanga, Bulacan, Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod, Davao, Cagayan de Oro—the cities of SM malls all over the country. SM has 10 partner schools for the scholars.

To qualify, scholars must come from public high schools, have average grades of at least 80 percent during the second to third grading period, with combined household income of at most P120,000 per year. Application for school year 2007-2008 is now open. Parents can be admitted from the common service avenues of SM department stores.

Another aspect of their education program is the School Building Program which is a response to the Department of Education's Adopt-a-School Program. To date, the foundation has donated 36 two-classroom SM Schoolhouses in 16 public elementary schools.

The target this year is to build 10 schoolhouses.

Angelo says a schoolhouse with two classrooms and two toilets costs some P600,000.

For its outreach program, Genesis singles says the foundation solicits free tuition and says the malls as drop-off points for the donations. For the first quarter, its Share your Extra Clothes drive, SM shoppers are encouraged to donate their "extras" such as clothes, food, furniture, housewares, etc. that can still be used by poor families. The program is right now and has entered 341,000 individuals in 31 provinces.

For the second quarter, the theme is Donate a Book, aimed at augmenting the Gaddi's book shortage in public schools. The malls provide kiosks for shoppers to give their books. This project started in 1997.

Lowest pace as Bayan is the theme for the third quarter. It solicits unwanted and not-so-good medicine from shoppers and drug companies.

For the Christmas quarter, the theme is Make a child happy, share a toy. This nine-year-old project has generated 132,944 toys.

Why are we ...

From page B2-2

real economic growth. The world followed him—except his own country. Why can a man of integrity and great competence not find a place in the Philippine political setting?

Government data shows that poor families have more children than middle-or upper income families.

4. Tony Meloto and Gawad Kalinga are doing what they can to solve housing and social problems of the poor. Whether and others like them can be supported by the lower income groups can be financially successful by organizing the communities to help themselves. In spite of these efforts, the slums in Metro Manila and in those on provincial cities continue to grow. Why have other governments been more successful in clearing slums and providing public housing for the poor?

5. The famous Indian ambassador told me that there are about 20,000 to 25,000 Indians involved in the US business. This does not include local people in this profitable activity. At 25 persons more or a week or 1,000 persons a year, it is very unlikely that a few investors can emerge from poverty. Microfinance units drop interest rates in the communities they serve but a much more rapid expansion of microfinance is needed to help the poor. Is foreign assistance being collected from the recovery do riding 'o'n people? Is their Philippine governor legal? Are you helping microfinancing activities in the country?

6. Aurora had a brilliant mind. The first two years (1973 and 1974) of what was described as "smiling martial law" saw the highest growth rates that the Philippines had ever experienced. Except for Singapore, foreigners saw the potential in all our neighbors. Why did Marcos fail when other less gifted authoritarian leaders in East Asia were successful?

Why are we always looking to succeed/survive? Isn't because we are an island nation with a Latin heritage that may be more of hindrance in the Caribbean islands?

Can a western democracy solve the economic problems of a nation with a per capita income of about $1,500? Should we have an Asian model of democracy where economic and education matters are delegated to a group of technocrats that are insulated from politics? Can we expect an elected composer of politicians to respond to elected economic changes making plans in a flat world? After all, an independent central bank, with little interference from politicians, seems to work quite well for our trading partners.

Should we not have one man one vote only in smaller political units like the barrios where there is greater transparency and where accountability is readily established? This was what JS Jesus dent Carter suggested when Deng Xiao Ping asked him about democracy for China. Why should we follow our present model of national elections requiring heavy elections spending? Can poor countries with western democracy produce the type of leadership that is necessary to solve long-term economic and poverty problems?

Why should I worry? (I have always been optimistic about the country but a lot impatient about the slowness of changes needed to reduce poverty). I agree with the forecast of President Arroyo and many reputable economist bankers, both domestic and foreign, that 2007 may be a banner year for the country.

Aside from the long term measures that we have to take, can we learn some lessons from Ireland? Like the Philippines, it is a deeply religious Catholic country with many political divisions that made it one of the poorest countries of Western Europe, with a large outflow of its talented and light hearted people to the US and UK. To quote from a conference board agenda the question at that time was, how could Ireland manage a "dramatic shift in social and economic goals heavily influenced by the Catholic Church to an economic and political framework that promotes growth and development."

At a meeting with the Irish prime minister in late 2005, I was told that after business groups, politicians, church and labor leaders agreed on national objectives, investments increased, per capita income surged past that of the rich ex-European countries, and this growth has been sustained. Irish migrants returned to their native land to further contribute to Ireland's prosperity!

Can this be a Philippine scenario? My answer is "yes"—if we have national units and a common program to reduce poverty and develop a larger middle class!

Edited speech delivered during the 36th BAP Investment Planning and Industries of 2007 BAP board of governors. The author is founder of ECE Group and the BAP fund. Such or mapos@globelines.com.ph

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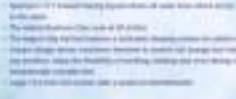

THE NEW ECONOMY CLASS

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BUSINESS Monday

The age of the 'philanthropreneur'

A person with money and conscience who continues to tap opportunities

JAIME ALAGUSTO 2 and on Ayala

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

CREATING QUITE a buzz during the recently concluded World Economic Forum in the ski resort town of Davos, Switzerland is the coming of age of the "philanthropreneur."

As the name suggests, a "philanthropreneur" combines the attributes of a philanthropist—one who has big money to spend on social responsibility projects—and an entrepreneur—one who creates opportunities to grow moneys.

The participants in the WEF panel discussion on "From Elite Giving to Social Investing: The New Philanthropy" were unified in saying that because of the gravity of problems plaguing the last remaining frontier, donors should be just as businesslike.

It's no longer enough for philanthropists to adopt a hands-off approach and just give money with the thought that it will just find its way to worthy projects.

Instead, there should be a method and a well-thought out program to maximize its use and those holding money should be more involved.

Otherwise, the money—no matter how substantial—will go to waste, according to the panelists that included Ayala Corp. chair and CEO Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II.

Sally Osberg, president and CEO of Skoll Foundation based in the United States, said during the discussion that the foundation created in 1999 (named the millionaire one of its money by putting in funds behind entrepreneurs who are already successful at bringing positive changes in communities throughout the world.

The foundation's seed money came from Jeff Skoll, co-founder of eBay, one of the world's most successful commercial websites.

Because the foundation does not have the expertise to go directly into the community level, it did the next best thing by funding the ventures of so-called social entrepreneurs, with the objective of helping them extend their reach and deepen their impact.

John M. Templeton Jr., president of the US-based John Templeton Foundation, adopts a similar approach.

Templeton said in an interview that he was in the business of financing companies that have done their share in solving world problems, such as tuberculosis and AIDS prevention.

"We urge that there should be more emphasis on measuring success," Templeton said, "and that success should come from the grassroots. We have to ask them what projects are necessary to help them."

It's fortunate that the Skoll Foundation and the Templeton Foundation manage to find home social entrepreneurs. Oftentimes are not so lucky.

TransFair USA president and CEO Paul Rice said making philanthropists aware of worthy projects to support remained a big challenge faced by social entrepreneurs who just need moneys to help their projects to the next level.

Rice explained that money does come in for projects such as TransFair's campaign to promote fair trade programs since farmers are paid fair, above-market prices for their products. But projects like these usually hit a funding wall.

"The collective challenge is to unlock capital for social ventures for them to go up to scale," Rice said before a packed crowd at the Hotel Nacional.

Barbara Stocking, director of Oxfam GB, United Kingdom, on the other hand, underscored the need for more accountability on the part of the organizations or companies receiving funds.

Stocking said organizations have to show that funding good projects does bring in results, to encourage philanthropists to continue providing funds.

On the part of corporate foundations, Julio Mosos, chair and CEO of SeaProtein, Chile, said social projects should not be mere accessories to the main business of companies.

Instead, he recommended that these social projects should be part of the core business.

"It issues such as poverty and climate change, business has a role to play in address them," Mosos said emphatically.

Zobel presented a similar view, arguing that there was an "increasing convergence of corporate social responsibility and business strategy, whereas before they have traditionally operated in parallel and independent paths."

"Businesses are far more capable and well-positioned to catalyze social development given the wealth of talent, managerial caliber and innovative skills available to them than our help-spread development," said Zobel, who was recently named Management Man of the Year for 2006.

Zobel cited the examples of Manila Water Co. Inc. and Globe Telecom.

MWCI has a "Water for the Poor" program, which has provided potable water to more than 860,000 residents from various poor communities in its concession area.

Not only was MWCI able to demonstrate increase in subscriber base and increase revenues from the sale of water, it was able to provide a service to communities who used to endure waiting in the wee hours of the morning to get water from the public pump.

Globe Telecom made a similar move when it expanded its subscriber base to include the lower income groups. It also introduced a reseller program where the not fortunate can sell "telecom" minutes to mobile phone users, thus providing them with an extra source of income.

Zobel demonstrated that when the twin motives of social development and profit were together, what's good for business becomes even better for the community.

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I'm 60 and counting

(Continued from last week)

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

Perspective thoughts

1. Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.

2. Look at everything as though you might be seeing it for the first time and for the last time.

The "First Time" look provides curiosity, excitement, anticipation, and learning. The "Last Time" look provides gratitude, memories, appreciation and reflection.

3. Separate the important from the unimportant.

4. Laugh at yourself ... everyone else is!

5. Giving

George Burns said it well: "When you stop giving and allowing something to the rest of the world, it's time to turn out the lights." The worth of our lives comes by what we give. What we keep, we squander. Look for ways to impart value, be generous with encouragement, and 'hand' our hope to those you lead.

6. Legacy

As a leader, when you die (if not you may to see your legacy being framed. To leave an indelible legacy in the lives around you, I would suggest these activities:

1. Choose today the legacy you want to leave others.

People will remember your life in one sentence—pick it now! Don't make your friends and family guess at your life's purpose at your funeral.

The framing of my one sentence began late in the 1960s and evolved into my life sentence today. Here is the sequence:

"I want to be a great pastor."

"I want to be a great communicator."

"I want to be a great writer."

"I want to be a great leader."

As my world expanded my one sentence changed. I looked at my previous statements and realized that my true desire was to not to be great, but to add value to others. It's a few years my one sentence was "I want to add value to people."

That statement evolved until I picked one sentence that I hope others will believe about me sometime after my death.

"I want to add value to leaders who will multiply value to others."

2. Live today the legacy you want to leave.

Dr. Anthony Campolo tells about a sociological study in which 50 people over the age of 95 were asked one question: "If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently?"

The open-ended question was met with a unanimity of answers from the respondents. However, three answers emerged to dominate the results of the study:

1. If I had it to do over again, I would reflect more.

2. If I had it to do over again, I would risk more.

3. If I had it to do over again, I would do more things that would live on after I am dead.

3. Appreciate today the value of a good legacy.

A life is short, history is long. Spend your life on projects that will outlive you.

Glenn Bruchhaus's mentor, "We have made at least a start in discovering the meaning to human life when we plant shade trees under which we know full well we will never sit."

Why is my life compounding?

1. Attitude

The seeds of positive compounding is contributing more than consuming.

I approach each day with the attitude that my success is determined by the seeds I sow, not the harvest I reap.

2. Personal Growth

The secret of your success is determined by your daily agenda.

3. Strength Zone

The only way to rise above average is to listen to an area where you excel.

4. Teamwork

Teamwork makes the dream work. Your success depends upon those closest to you. Inspire a shared vision that binds you together for big dreams and audacious goals.

5. Partnerships

Mother Teresa, one of the great leaders of the 20th Century, embraced partnership with these words: "I can do what you cannot do and you can do what I cannot do. Together we can do great things."

6. Credibility

When you consistently combine character with competence, you establish credibility.

Life compounds positively or negatively. The choice is up to you. The age at which you make your choices will determine the magnitude of the compounding.

1. Choices made during youth yield enormous compound interest.

2. Choices made in the middle of life earn a small degree of compound interest.

3. Choices put off until late in life don't have time to compound.

IN THIS ISSUE
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Mel Gibson's end of civilization epic/C4

LIFESTYLE
Editor-Chuchi Banal-Formoso Editor Lito B. Zulueta

NEW YEAR'S SHOCK

San Miguel kills orchestra, chorale

SAN MIGUEL Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale

By Fidel A. Tarrosa

THE SAN MIGUEL Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale are dead.

Late last month, instrumentalists of the only corporate-supported orchestra in the country were summoned one by one by the big boss who informed them of the non-renewal of their contracts.

Ditto with the members of the San Miguel Chorale.

Many of the orchestra and chorale members did not get representation.

It is not known what happened to Flavio Cardinali, the renowned director and artistic director of the San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts.

Insiders said that San Miguel Corp., the biggest food and beverage company in Southeast Asia, was "never involved" in supporting basketball. San Miguel has four basketball teams in the professional league: San Miguel, Coca-Cola, Coca-cola and Purefoods.

The latest income statement by San Miguel showed the conglomerate in in the utmost pink of health. In November, it reported that its nine-month net income grew 28 percent, to Ph.17 billion from P5.23 billion in the same period last year, boosted by its strong local and international beer operations and strong sales by its incredible dairy unit, National Foods Ltd.

Both founded in 2000, the highly promising San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale were suddenly debunked early this year while no one was looking.

And no one is expected to speak on that.

Bandalla festival

The 2nd International Bandalla Festival with 9 Champagne City, Feb. 22-March 31, at the Hilarion Hall of the Silliman University. It will feature not only performances but also exhibits highlighting the plucked-string traditions of the Visayas region and the Philippines and sampling of plucked-string instruments from various cultures.

RYAN Capistrah

The project is a tie-up between the Musicological Society of the Philippines, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and the province of Negros Occidental headed by arts-friendly Gov. George Ansala.

Call 8300028

Romanian violin superstar

Alexandru Tomescu just wrapped up his highly successful European tour with a piano trio.

He will return to Manila to close the Great Performances Series at the Philamlife Theater on Feb. 24, 8 p.m., with pianist Mary Anne Espina.

His Manila concert is a tribute to violinists Bedrosian Bonnevs, Carmencita Lozada and Antonio Villejo...all violin greats of their generation.

Call 9307533 or 8906-5144270.

Return performance

International Russian pianist Ilya Rashkovsky, who debuted in Manila in December to great acclaim and media acclaim, will be back April 15 at the Philamlife Theater with an entirely new recital program. Call 9007923 or 09985368279.

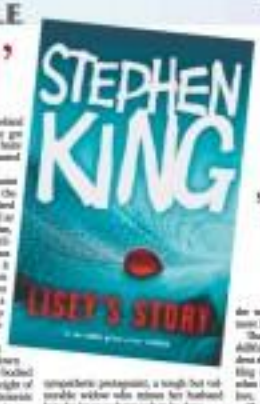
War memoirs

The book not to be missed for the New Year is Gustavo Gonzalez Ortega's autobiography "Mosell, Elsewhere."

BOOKMARK C1

The food and beverage giant would rather support basketball than the performing arts, insiders say

The King of the 'Story'



In 'Lisey's Story,' his most complex and measured novel to date, Stephen King shows that love, art and fear can come from the most unusual places

"Lisey's Story: A Novel"
By Stephen King
Scribner, New York
2006, 532 pages

By Raul S. De Vera

MOST AUTHORS HAVE A DUAL outlet in their books: trumpeting previously published titles, but Stephen King is one lifer more audacious.

He doesn't have such a page in his newest book, the novel "Lisey's Story." In quintessential King fashion, however, the subtitle should be enough.

Perhaps the best-known of all the current Bestsellers, King has been in the news lately because of a perception that he was retiring (not quite yet), and because of the news that his "Dark Tower" series was receiving the comic-book treatment over at Marvel Comics.

Like one of his surprisingly resilient bogeymen, King just keeps on coming. "Lisey's Story" is only the latest in his fabled output, his 63rd (or 64th) book of fiction. It is a complex and ambitious book that seems to be a masterful tapestry woven from the threads of all his other stories. It is an ode to storytelling and marriage, in a personally Stephen King way.

Though his other works are pieces are more frightening, King's books featuring writers for protagonists carry a palpable personal weight to them, with King clearly channeling himself, making the book this year's most substantial and seductive.

That was the case with King's "Dog of Bones," which, in its own way, was his 9/11-shifter booklet. That novel's protagonist, novelist Michael Noonan, was a stand-in for King, and that Noonan clearly exists in the world of "Lisey's Story" shows that the connections are magically deep.

After the death of her husband, the successful writer Lisey Dashwood is left to sift through the detritus of his life, including his papers and fellowship. Lisey is tormented, according to King, like "Tim Live" is dealing with an empty house, a sister who's gone remote, and a psychotic stalker who is intent on hunting her.

But that's not what's bothering Lisey the most. The primary signs and whispers to tell us that her book—via the ghost—is trying to tell her something.

And it is an astonishingly trippy thing that Scott wants to tell her. Lisey must go back to her marriage, deeper, deeper into Scott's horrific childhood, all the way to a place with a pool of "wonders," as well as a terrible thing that haunts Scott—and now, Lisey as well.

This is a book about the secret vocabulary of husbands and wives, about the book and the bad guilty, what sounds like sorcery, about how someone has use the most meaningful of all.

From there, Lisey (and thus the reader) finds out the stories hidden behind Scott's stories. "Maybe when you get right down to what's the short hairs gets, truth once lived, and all it wanted was to come out."

King is also channeling the quiet insecurities of a writer, down to the quirky language. It can be posited that King reveals some of his creed as a writer: "Be damned that, for him, writing a book was like finding a bill folded and shoved away in the pages and following it to see where it might lead. Sometimes—if you were lucky, if you were brave, if you persevered—it brought you to a treasure. And the treasure was never the money you got for the book (though you got the book)."

"Lisey's Story" shows that King's maturity that he was slowing down into a good thing. The novel is full-bodied and rich, displaying King at the height of his craft, using parenthetical statements and even paragraph breaks as metronomes.

An earlier King novel would already be entitled by ending on page 267, but "Lisey's Story," amazingly enough, actually starts a distinct thread from that point, though the last part really feels like a friendly epilogue more than anything else.

It is a testament to Stephen King that he can plunge a sweetness that emerges from the darkness. Lisey is an accessible, sympathetic protagonist, a tough but vulnerable widow who misses her husband but also knows that (and she's also wanted in the dark." That aspect makes "Lisey's Story" a gift to survivors even partners.

But this is a King novel, and nobody does horror like Stephen King. In "Lisey's Story," the horror is born in tangled memories that is both a creeping shadow and a murderous monster. While the things whom he tried to pay, its prisoners, users and life in the most unexpected places, is actually most frightening.

"Lisey's Story" unleash a genre that is an skillfully subtle and menacingly self-evident horror that for this part down put. King depicts that fear as the flipside of when is bright and possesses beautiful in love.

The presence of both of these aspects popular "Lisey's Story" a welcome cocktail of drama and night more than enjoyable the most accomplished novelist out there.

"Every long marriage has two hearts, one light and one dark," writes Stephen King. "Here again is the dark heart of theirs."

Available in hardcover at National Book Store.

ANGELINA. Going Lorna Kaine-Tiwi, Yasin Sissel Jose, Karina Rebecci and Stephanie Ann Ir Sissel Jose

New book by Asuncion David-Maramba

PROFESSOR ASUNCION DAVID-Maramba's latest book, "Essays On Living: Beyond The Classroom," was launched recently at Bruselhoeks Group Intl 4, Makati City.

The book, published by Anvil Publishing Inc., is the second compilation of Maramba's essays after her life as a professor, director and now a literature

PROFESSOR Maramba and her alumni open "Beyond the Classroom"

teacher. Her annotations also touch on literature, history, politics and governance, and travel. She even offers suggestions on religious reform and the clergy.

The event was graced by Maramba's former colleagues, schoolmates, students, relatives, and friends from media and civil society. Included in the throng of attendees were Inez Nora, women's rights advocate and wife of the late Filipino freedom fighter and Senator Ninoy Aquino; Rosalyn Almocera's sister, Raissa "Rica" Pimentel; artist F. Sionil Jose and his wife Carla; Teodoro Benigno, the family doctor; relatives and friends of Ambassador Leticia Shahani; writer and cultural icon Gilda Cordero-Fernando; and Siel Cruz, former Civil Service commissioner.

The book launch began with Anvil's publishing manager Karina Bolasco's opening remarks. There was also a special double tribute to Maramba. Guests in the first part, "Beyond," was from Ricardo. The second part, "The Classroom," featured in turn/s, Alexis Salazar, Archie Aquino, Fr. Chris Saloma and Ms. Amy Bautista.

First honored librarian "for unlocking the door of your classroom and classwork gaining us through life... with your story you have given us courage, soul-enhancing optimism."

Maramba is a graduate of Maryknoll, St. Theresa's College Manila and also finished law school. She enjoyed a continuous teaching career spanning 40 years of handling literature and writing courses. Best known among the 17 or so books she has edited or written are her Philippine literature textbooks which have contributed to the awareness of Philippine literature in the country and her three have books on modern Filipino heroes, heroines and historical personages. She now describes herself as a retired professor, book editor and/or occasional columnist.

'Song and Dance' from Rep

CARLA GONFALO-LOPEZ/CS

CALLED A "THEATER CONCERT" BY its composers, the great Andrew Lloyd Webber ("Cats," "Evita," "Phantom of the Opera," and many more) series, here who wrote the musical with Don Black, "Song and Dance" is not your typical Broadway musical.

Part One, "Tell Me on a Sunday," the story of Emma, an English girl who comes to New York in (and encounters and loses, to add emotion to song. Part Two, "Variations," tells the continuing story of Joe who comes to New York from a little town in Nebraska. Becomes Emma's lover but leaves her. It is told completely in dance, supported by seven other dancers.

Carla Gonfalo-Lopez also brings her years of experience on stage and television—including a stint in the London production of "Miss Saigon," where, as understudy to the lead role Kim, she played the role many times—to the starring role of Emma. She performed in many plays and musicals for Repertory Philippines before and after her London experience. She won Best New Actor for Television during the 2000 PMPC Star Awards.

Sunny Marshall directs the role of Joe, supported by Broadcast dancers under the direction of Douglas Nierva.

Director is Jay Vicara. Chino Bonnides designs the sets, Monique Duque is lights designer, while Sidny Echevarria is the musical director. Ensemble provides musical accompaniment.

"Song and Dance" runs Feb. 9-March

Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero's 'Belong Puti' from Peta

"BELONG Puti," directed by Monique Padilla

THE PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL Theater Association brings its 29th theater season to a close with "Belong Puti," a play originally from Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero's "The Woman with a White Veil," adapted (from Dog de Leon's Filipino translation) with additional text and directed by Nonon Padilla.

"Belong Puti" is the story of Rosalvil Hinoyola, an artistically and spiritually bankrupt playwright. He ends one night of drunken revelry when he meets him in the Great Beyond so he can finish his last play.

Rosalvil stages the scene in his mind, asking the audience with him from his receipt donations to the illustrious members whom rules in shoes to make the party taking place in honor of Rosella Manalo. It continue in her 50s, the actress with a white veil on her last which she takes off to reveal the face of a woman in her early 20s. She also turns out to be a selfish woman who sends her aging husband to another room, alternates all her friends' cards for cruel comments, flirts with her daughter's husband and backstabs everyone else including her own mother.

The play takes a strange note as Rosalvil, stung by his wife's cruelty, starts to gauge on her flawed heroine by turning the playwright into a marionette held here on string, and taking on the role of Angel. In this play continues with actors taking on roles that are her parodies of Amorita's obsession with physical and superficial beauty.

"Belong Puti" features Maria Ofilada, Eli Guevarra, Lou Veloso, Mandy Gaza, Yvonne Elliz-Alabao, Shirlyn Mae Guare, Upsing Calang-Fernandez, Jose Dorsalina, Mike Hontomares, Carme Sevilleo and Nonon Padilla-Antonino. Production design is by National Artist Salvador Bernal, lighting design by Binky Maimaron and music design by Bodjie Fernandez.

"Belong Puti" runs Feb. 9, 16, 23 and March 2, 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; and Feb. 10-11, 17-18, 24-25 and March 3-4, 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., at The Theater Center located at 5 Sumvosin Drive, New Manila, Quezon City (behind the QC Sports Club along E. Rodriguez Avenue).

Call 7258584, 7258684, 9917-8534567, 0918-9354406, E-mail mpe@petatheater.com or visit www.peta.theater.com.

NEWS images dug up by filmmakers Peter Parsons and Lucky Guilleroni from the US National Archives

New war docu to be premiered

ATROCITIES PERPETRATED BY THE Imperial Japanese Army during World War II 60 years ago are finally being given historical attention. A grim and thought-provoking film by Peter Parsons and Lucky Guilleroni has been produced and is being released in time to commemorate the Battle for Manila, which began on Feb. 3, 1945.

The documentary, "Manila 1945: The Forgotten Atrocities" puts the blame on Japanese higher authorities, contrary to the usual story that either common Japanese forces were trapped in Manila by the American and therefore decided to fight to the last man, or that defeated Imperial headquarters disobeyed orders from Tokyo to withdraw to Japan and instead continued to fight.

If the Japanese intended to leave Manila as Open City as General MacArthur had done three years earlier, then why did they spend two months terrorizing it with pillboxes and sniper holes, barbed wire and dynamite? Field orders cited indicate the atrocities were indeed planned. Over 100,000 thousand noncombatants perished during this period including the devastation of the city.

The American forces are not let off scot-free either. There are plenty of examples of deaths that were caused by their heavy artillery.

Parsons and Guilleroni spent days and months sifting through papers in the US National Archives and interviewing survivors and historians.

The documentary film is rated "B" by the MTRCB and DVD copies are available at Fully Booked in Bonifacio Global City, Solidaridad Book Store in Padre Faura, Ermita, Manila.

The movie will be premiered Feb. 6, 9:30 a.m., at the auditorium of the Miguel de Benavides (Central Library) Building of the University of Santo Tomas. Documentary-are featured Artist F. Sionil Jose and historian Rico Jose.

San Miguel kills...

from page C1

The book has a stunning recollection of Ermita before the war. It tells about the coats of the Governor.

One discovers that the author's late husband, Lt. Ismael A. Cruz, is a nephew of Asst Head. In fact, Nakpil had lived with Asst's sister, Maria, in the Cruz residence in Paco during the Japanese Occupation. That makes Gemma Cruz-Araneta, the author's daughter with Cruz, the grandniece of Nakpil.

One also discovers that on one side of the Governor's Gate, Nakpil is the cousin of Jose Mocorgal. Jaime Nakpil, the first and the last Filipino opera singer to sing at La Scala (I Milan in Italy).

Nakpil opens the book with an observation that present Manila, where she was born and raised, was not the garish, broken-down, patchwork, district it is today.

In the 1920s, '30s and before February 1945, says the author, Ermita was a charming, colonial town built by businessmen and statesmen for their defense. It had an air of Casablanca, Singapore or Hong Kong.

But the most riveting part is really the untold war story of the author and how her genteel life in Ermita came to an abrupt end in the bloody summer of 1945.

On the night of Feb. 3, 1945, a Japanese sentry was found dead near the corner of the Cruz residence in Paco, and the Japanese officers ranked revenge on the entire Cruz family, including Nakpil's husband.

This was the same week Japanese soldiers entered the cops but of the family of prominent Intellectuals, known to his wife, Dr. Ramon Cruz, who was

Bea Alonzo talks about Mico Palanca

IN METRO MAGAZINE'S FEBRUARY ISSUE, cover girl Bea Alonzo talks about her "exclusive dating" status with fellow actor Mico Palanca, her suitor for three years now.

"He's very patient... a very reassuring person... He is very deep, very intelligent," says Alonzo.

Luis de Terra of Terry's Identities deli and restaurant teaches readers how to organize a fun Valentine's dinner date at home and how to serve the right wines.

Metro also guides readers on how to prepare for summer—where to buy lingerie to seduce the man in your life; how to wear the new short and sexy hairstyles; where to get custom-made suits under P5,000; and how to get effective results in 45 minutes.

Metro's February issue is now available in newsstands. Call 4121272 loc. 6658.

Derek Ramsay, suits, jewelry, baldness

A DASHING AND DAPPER DEREK RAMSAY shows off his athletic side in the latest issue of the country's only men's style magazine, Metro hiM. The actor and model graces the cover of Metro hiM where he talks about his current obsessions, Ultimate Frisbee, and confesses his ultimate dream: to coach his son's basketball team.

The star of "Super Inggo" also reveals something pricing secret—on how he keeps fit. Clue: He doesn't need to go the gym.

Also in Metro hiM's first quarter issue, learn 10 ways to wear a suit jacket, and where to shop for the best bachelors, pajamas and eyeglasses. Read the goods on the hair copper and brass jewelry, and how to wear the in colors of the season, orange and yellow.

No time for the gym? Get fit in less time with a revolutionary 25-minute workout. There's also a story on how to deal with bald men, as Metro hiM features the country's only hair transplant surgeon.

Metro hiM is available nationwide. Call (63)(2)721[illegible] 4000.

Not so apocalyptic

From page C4

moves down from the snows to a group of firefighters led by Nicolas Cage, "Apocalypto" swoons on Japan Pure without diets, however, a too small a dot in the context to carry the burden of the movie.

The result, as is chimed in by a number of critics from the mainstream, is an unforgivable negligent passing over of the Maya's rich achievements in science, culture and the arts.

Of course, as the title suggests, something big is happening, but you tend to forget that during the movie and just try to keep up with the chase. The title itself is a foreboding of something terminal, not really positive, despite Gibson's doubtful commissioning of it as meaning "a new beginning."

It appears the movie effectively leaves the impression Mayan collapse to an approaching Spanish fleet. Talk about a namesake.

RUDY Youngblood makes powerful acting debut as Jaguar Paw.

Not so apocalyptic

By Eldrin Paul A. Peredo
Correspondent

A FELL LOOK INTO MEL GIBSON'S "APOCALYPTO" (Touchstone Pictures), the viewer may start to figure out what lead-character (signal) Rudy Youngblood played by big-screen lawyer Rudy Youngblood has to do with the end of the ancient Mayan world.

Because the catch is, Jaguar Paw has nothing to do with it. Quite the contrary. The climax leading to the Mayan apocalypse leaves everything to do with how Jaguar Paw eventually leads his life.

Instead of telling us how the grand Mayan civilization collapsed, the movie seems bent to show us the story of Jaguar Paw, an otherwise nobody who must deal with the changes of the times. The viewer should have seen this coming from the movie's poster: "An epic journey home."

The viewer's reasons for expecting the an-

JAGUAR Paw (Youngblood) is captured by Mokcane warriors to be sold to slavery.

cient Mayan civilization to be of broader scale are obvious. Earlier Mel Gibson directorials were hardly protagonist driven. Of course, in "The Passion," the Christ was the epic.

What's more, the knights the crew went through to recreate the great jungle world of the Maya were nothing short of ambitious, from ensuring that the Mesoamerican ethnicity of the cast was as far as possible approximated in terms of looks and language, to building the production design in a real jungle.

But there it is. The implosion of the Mayan cities is chosen only in hints: drought, famine, and sickness. Add to that the brutal slaying of wars as offering to the gods on the hill, difficult times would pass, fields of rotting bodies exponentially increasing the already poor health conditions in a fever setting.

There is, for sure, that larger picture, but as both fate and as the movie would be like an ant looking up at the sky. Or, if that's too pedestrian, a house, if you will. Because the story, written by Gibson and Farhad Safinia, is happening on the ground.

It is of Jaguar Paw and his tribe being pushed by Mokcane warriors and later brought to the city either to be sold or sacrificed. The story is about his spectacular escape.

Adrenaline

Oh, the thrill. Gad's foremost. The adrenaline rush is as primal as it can get. The action, including the grisly, small-scale battles, is as feathered as the sea. Gibson, sexually

Mel Gibson's end-of-civilization epic is impressive but hardly explains the collapse of the ancient Mayans

is betraying his severe bloodlust. "Gladiator" is better anticipated in this pathos. But then again, the Romans were a lot more "civilized."

The latest chase should get mads from critics for its brilliant cinematography and editing. The production design is detailed enough, thanks to extensive research by Mayan-culture experts. Hey, if they can explicate the language, script and the culture, down to the actor wardrobe-edges!

But that is not perfect. The language Gibson used is Yucatec Maya, still spoken by scattered Mayan tribes today.

"Apocalypto" (from 1st Fri on the Mayan theory of the apocalypse (which is supposed to happen sometime 2012), and filmed on imagined strip of time at the downfall of the Maya half a century ago as parallel with the present.

Much like how "World Trade Center"

MEL Gibson the director in action.

LIFESTYLE

Deadly exotic

2 out of 3 Filipinos are proficient in English.
Let's make it 3 out of 3.
Study at:
VERNON TAPALLA'S

By Lito B. Zulueta

LEDIA VELASCO'S WOMEN seem to approximate Gauguin's South Pacific figures, cultivating the same rustic appeal, the same plainness.

But Velasco is not Gauguin. She couldn't be by virtue of her gender and her socio-historical moorings. Although, like Gauguin, she tends to contour her figures, the similarity ends with the rather edgy spirit of the age. And it's an age that, while rife with gender stereotyping, is also lined by confusion.

The most contemporary sensibility of Velasco is evident in the stylized poses. But more so give her Filipina figures a certain fashion-like quality, fragmentable and even dangerous. Hers are Filipina women on the edge, perhaps on the verge of a visceral breakdown, perhaps about to spring or stun whoever the enemy.

Her newest show seems to flirt[illegible] in order to obviate sexual harassment. The title of the series is predictable, "Allure"; it more than connotes the time-honored qualities of seductiveness and sensuality. It's connotation that invalidates the[illegible].

But allure comes from the late Middle English word *alurer* which is further derived from a host of other old words, such as the German *lure* or "lure," to entice or[illegible]. The title of the show is exactly "lure," a "decoy" a "trap."

Velasco herself seems to draw from great[illegible] to tighten the trap. Her figures in acrylic on[illegible] are clad in the genuine Filipiniana—to[illegible] the credentials of another superior woman artist—that playfully[illegible] the flesh while ensnaring the[illegible]'s eyes. While the fabrics are genuine, their use also cut and positioned to be[illegible] rather than cover and[illegible].

Velasco exploits the Philippine genre style of accessorizing. Filipinas with images of[illegible] folk Catholicism, such as the scapular and the[illegible]. Her[illegible] appropriates the staples of fashion photography, making her women pose like[illegible] queens, complete with the dismissive pouting lips.

The effect on the viewer is unnerving and[illegible] unnatural. The figures exist seductive too, a spell that[illegible] as well as unnerves. The viewer, however, finds his ambivalence because of the irresistible pull of the exclusionist. But the magic charm is really a curse. In the hour of[illegible] the more righteous.

"Allure: An Intimate Look at the Filipina" opens 8th & 9 p.m., and runs until 8th 22. Galerie Anspach is at 537 P. Guevarra St. and Mezzanine Area, Addition Hills, San Juan. Mabe Manila. Call 7256[illegible] or visit www.ga[illegible].com.

"PERFECT Combination"

"TWO Women at the Harvest"

"GOOD Listener"

THE ARTIST

Magsaysay-Ho revives romance of tempera paintings

"COUPLE"

ANITA MAGSAYSAY-HO, working with Singapore-based art consultant Mario Tyau, is holding a one-woman exhibition of egg tempera works and monotypes at the Yuchengco Museum, RCBC Tower, Makati City.

In "Anita Magsaysay-Ho: From Egg Tempera to Print," the 92-year-old artist is showcasing decades-old works, with her trademark Filipino women in the mixed media or monotype.

MAYA Star of Metro Transit Commissary Sr. Luz Maria of the Capuchin Sisters, and sponsor Winnie Go

Originally an orthodox medium of painting, egg tempera has gone far from its medieval heyday. It is considered as the hardest medium to prepare and handle.

Prevalent in Southern Europe's Middle Ages, tempera is traditionally created by hand-grinding dry-powdered pigments into egg yolks, which are the fundamental binding element. The concoction is sometimes combined with honey, water, milk and a variety of plant gums.

The traditional method requires the application of numerous small brush strokes in a cross-hatching technique, making the colors, which are applied over each other, resemble painted when accumulated, and a deeper color when curtailed.

Because tempera cannot be applied in thick layers as oil paints can, tempera paintings rarely have the deep color saturation that oil paintings can achieve. However, tempera colors do not change over time, whereas oil paints darken, yellow, and go transparent as time goes by.

Mentored by Fernando and Pablo Amorsolo, Vicente Rivera, Ivanos Miranda and Fabian de la Rosa, Anita Magsaysay-Ho is considered the Philippines' first female Modernist.

Born on May 28, 1914, Magsaysay-Ho has mastered the art of egg tempera, depicting images from her own life while growing up in the rural areas. Her paintings have obtained record prices at international auctions, reaching as high as 20 times the original catalog estimate.

The proceeds from the exchange in the exhibition will be donated to the Capuchin Sisters of the Holy Family Home and the Philippine General Hospital's Diamond ward. The exhibit is now through February.

Call 63-632-29237 or 63-9298 3826, or e-mail metro@metrobank.com.ph; 7 1655566 or 35 326 17, or e-mail artsection@philstar.net.

The evolutionary process in art

By Constantine C. Tejero

THE TITLE OF JING TUBALLAS' PAINTING exhibit "Explore on the Dining Table" is misleading. One would think it's about still life of food itself, but the show really explores the creative process...the artist's anxieties, doubts and hesitations, aggravations, tortured imagination.

Consider these pieces in acrylic on canvas and cut mounts, presented by Silverlens Gallery until Feb. 16 at B1 Gondor of The Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City.

That title refers to the artist's makeshift studio, that is, her dining room...particularly the dining table on which these pieces were created.

But instead of table settings, we find bold colorations and quasi-abstraction. Instead of images of bread, fruits or wine bottles, we see modern buildings at dusk, old street lamps in silhouette, shadowy figures on a beach.

Tuballas reveals how images were inspired by her travels in Europe, particularly "the flavor and drive of beauty and art." The viewer can accept that in the distorted street lamps in "Illumined," or the architectural details in "Master Writer"—all done in rich color tonality.

It all actually starts with color, as with the piece called "Silent Chorus," consisting of black outlines of figures against a mixed color in a blaze of red, yellow and orange.

The artist relates how that piece came about: "I kept putting elements on it until it reached a point where I thought it looked beautiful already. But somehow, deep inside me, I knew it was not finished yet."

Reviewing some sketches she had made as an art student, she came upon a study of women on the beach having a conversation. Intuitively she found the painting's missing link, and so added the image to the three self-reflects.

Each of these pieces Tuballas considers a product of "inspired moments." She adds: "I want the viewer to feel my passion in the colors and the strokes, to see how I gave my best of those moments to each painting."

CLOCKWISE from top: "Silent Chorus," "Master Writer" and "Illumined"

The bold coloration reflective of emotional intensity, she says, comes from the Abstract Expressionism and the Fauvism, particularly Matisse. But, she admits she's also inspired by Chagall, Dalmau and Hamedarayan, as can be gleaned from her image-making and free-hand compositions.

Though confined to a little room, a real artist can always unleash his or her imagination. Thus, the "explosion" in the exhibit's title refers not just to the artist's European sojourn but also to those adventures of the imagination, including her experimentation in color and form.

"When he couldn't paint anymore, Matisse continued to create art by cutting colored papers," the curators say. "When I paint, I keep myself challenged by working toward fresh thoughts in tough circumstances, and then setting new benchmarks. It sustains my process of discovery and keeps the excitement in my painting, and I know this will last for a century."

Tuballas studied painting at the De La Salle-College of Art. Realizing as a student, she is now gradually eliminating figuration from her canvas.

"Filled with a new sense of freedom," she says, "I now sensuously explore the realms of the abstract, experimenting, pushing the confines of my knowledge."

She also took up photography and jewelry design. She had mounted several exhibits of photos of landscapes and underwater species, and won twice the Tahitian Pearl Trophy for jewelry design.

"I like discovering how most creatives went about doing their works," she says. "There I imagine what they were thinking and how they felt and expressed themselves through their art."

All these illustrate not just the confessions that underlie the artist's final idea-for-realization, any process that occurs in art-making.

"SHAW"

Montemayor's 'Bagong Araw'

FERDIE MONTEMAYOR SHOWcases his newest works on canvas in "Bagong Araw," at the Ikonos Gallery, on Feb. 10-28.

Montemayor is known for his expressionist representations of cities and urban life seen from an aerial perspective. His new works in acrylic take him in depictions of the suburbs and their inhabitants drenched in the warm tones of local sunlight.

The new series is a result of the artist's unique reworking of water-based acrylic medium, which he applies in layers of varying effects of opacity, transparencies and translucencies.

Montemayor's brushwork is liquid; traces of his passage still resilient, with the dispersal of colors running spontaneously across the pictorial frame. Sealed in glossy finish, the artist's predominantly white canvases acquire a more like luster, almost evocative of inspirework.

"Bagong Araw" opens Feb. 10, 6 p.m. Ikonos Gallery is an affiliate of the Silverlens Powerhouse Bar (for lots, Culinary and Boutique) and is at 71 Dasmariñas St. and Lascuna Sts., Cubao, Q.C. Call 7229801 or visit www.ikonosgallery.com.

VISUAL A

Stevensarios at West

Abstractionists at Duemila

"MUSEUTTO #Bus, L
Edwin Cuacobera, F

Elows at Avellana

"CASTRO

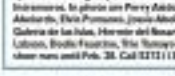
Reglero-awa at Finale

"LANDSCAPE"

'Larger than Life'

Arts Month exhibits at National

Art training at National Museum


GRUPPING. Members of a fellowship of artists opened an eight-group exhibition at Quadstores, in photo are Pete Zaldivar, Abelardo, Elvie Formoso, Jessie Abdulla, Galeria de las Islas, Hermie del Rosario, Lubos, Bodie Fuentes, Wig Tumaya-as show runs until Feb. 28. Call 5211111.

"ULTIMATE Sacrifice"

"CHAIN of Command" I

"10PT Agenda"

The art of living in harmony

By Kitty Go
Contributor

THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW INCIDENTS in my career where I didn't want to be at an event or a press briefing, then ended up moved by such events enough to write about it, think up a story or make a priceless contact.

Such was my meeting in Hong Kong with Filipino artist Antero del Castillo (AKA www.anterodelcastillo.com/Julius_anthony.del_castillo/index.php), whose primary subject in his paintings is Muslim and Christian relations.

For someone who reports on the glamorous world of fashion, I had made up my mind before we met that this topic of our sorts certainly not going to be up there with the buzz of an "it" bag, I must confess.

Del Castillo was chosen by the Asian Cultural Council (ACC) to show in Hong Kong last October together with other artists—Aida Lara and Pak Sheung Chuen from Hong Kong and Wei Qing of Inner Guangzhou.

He has been awarded the fourteenth Joe Hotchkiss Fellowship for visual arts to undertake research on Byzantine-icon paintings in American collections and to take part in a residency program.

Del Castillo is a painter from Manila who is also an assistant professor of painting at the University of the Philippines Integrated School in Quezon City. He is still at the degree where he has to have a full-time job to support his art, but from what he exhibited in Hong Kong, he may soon be giving up the day job.

Aside from numerous exhibitions and awards, Del Castillo notched at the National Museum, where he did conservation of polychrome wooden sculptures on icons and altars. It was there in 2000 that he discovered what was to become his signature medium: gold leaf.

"CHAIN of Command" I

Marriage

His medium and large pieces combine oil and gold leaf in the Byzantine or early Christian style illustrating the controversial issues of contemporary Muslim and Christian tensions. This eclectic and sociopolitical message makes describing his work in words very difficult.

Aside from the gold leaf, a signature style of Del Castillo's work is the use of frames to narrate, isolate and unify his visual ideas. He frames his work on earlier Byzantine artists did with religious paintings and altar installations.

His subdivision religious icons with equally iconic symbols of Muslim-Christian relations—the military, women in burqas, interreligious relationships, crusades, Muslims holding hostes (a symbol of heresy used to torch Christians and Muslims), churches, mosques, Arabic messages and scenes of devastation.

Del Castillo makes it his mission to unite Christians and Muslims. "In an artist," he says, "one way I can contribute to this world it is use my art to draw out the unity of Muslims and Christians."

His ardor to bring Muslims and he has spent time in Davao, where he observed that Christians could be unclear to Muslims. He once had a one-man show and invited imams, Catholic priests and members of the Philippine military to an event "where they all respected each other."

The Cultural Center of the Philippines, Shelmadeng Fellow and Mindanao State brought Del Castillo's work. Private collectors include National Artist Napoleon Abueva, Jim and Rebecca Fullerton, Boggie Quisumbing and Bhanjee Pitney Mamaniu.

It is our personal few contemporary Filipino artists to self or exhibit abroad to establish a following. The same together with local reputation of the market) is happening in contemporary Chinese art.

Michelle Soeper, a representative of the Asian Cultural Council in Hong Kong, said: "A native Philippine artist with a local following is always a good sign of talent."

"REVELATION," by Christian Mirang

"NOTHING You Can Do That Can Not Be Done," by Raymond Eumolong Libiran

"TUGETOG," by Maximo Cian Jr.

2006 AAP Annual harvest

By Gina Dantemanila
Contributor

IT WAS A CONTEST THAT CLEARLY separated the boys from the men, the dividing line was visible light and shadow. Which proved to be quite a tall order for the jury including this writer, as there were innumerable entries that fell into the way of the good, the bad, the provocative—and the mediocre.

The 56th Art Association of the Philippines (AAP) Annual had limits, from the start, limits with logistical problems, as the sponsor of the cash prizes had backed out, and its long-time patron, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, has, as of this writing, yet to come to the rescue of the grand old dame of Philippine art.

Many of the artists had also opted to join more lucrative contests, albeit there were more offerings available at the AAP festival.

The first phenomenon in the painting category is Christian Silbang for "Revelation," a praiseworthy conjunction image inspired by stories from the Bible and Christian lore made downtown, clean and multi—captured in their divinely paradoxical hues. Right in frontiers and deconjunction.

The second prize went to Charlie Rene Villapanan's "Triad of Ego," a postmodern rendering of melancholic and death enamel on a couple of pot birds, a haunting scene devoid of melodrama.

Third prize went to Salvador Carpio Sinco's "Sunset in Bangui," a surreal view of a biker at the helm of a make-believe contraption of a folk engine.

I also liked Emmanuel Balbosa's "Play," with its subtleties of grey and prudence in a fellas-ensemble of characters, showing his trademark feline characters.

Honorable mention went to Joje Johnson "Ang Bakwasang Anyo at Buhay Emmanuel," with its image of criminals in religious frock; Ben Gimena's "Ben Hooper"; Walter Benaang's "Ang Pamana sa Isang Isang"; and George Valenciano's "Pagsasama."

The mixed-media category was dominated by new names. First prize went to Lucio Tagatac's "Properties," a top view of a dress colony, made from salvaged fabric, encrusted by ubiquitous tins and cans as markers as an emblem of the "World condition."

Second was Ivan Mo'O Guanzo's "Allpass," a minimalist view of subterranean life, cleverly assembled from painted dried twigs.

Third was Emmanuelsson Gampal "Shrubed," a multi-layered tube of water—not currency, complete with thin patches of goldmarked in decent panels.

Honorable mention citations went to Cesar Palacio's "Untitled," Benjie Bonito's "Woodcraft Series," Christian Mawagh "Sisters in Arms" and Nicken Ferrer's "Crossroads."

As in the past, the sculpture category was generally ballsiness, with entries that lacked imagination and logic, and most verging on the sophomoric and the embarrassingly liberal.

A judge said: "There's really a problem when artists are cheated by the available material rather than by the idea they aspire to explore and interpret." I couldn't help you agree.

The first prize went to Antonio Chan Ah Yi "Bigang," a literally figurative piece with a pair of bodies ascending to the top of the recycled wood serving as pedestal/construction.

Second was Glenn Cagandahan's "Food and Water," a commentary on Pope's "Malice," with a pair of protagonists locked in their combat, with a serious drapel in Philippine flag, symbolic of how our politicos settle issues, personalities, as they say.

The drawing category enlisted past winners and a few new names, with first prize going to veteran Raymund Libiran for his "Nothing You Can Do That Cannot Be Done," a medley of demonic personae culled from all key players of Philippine society.

Second was Christopher Pasco's "Mixed Me-

"PAA/PINTAS," by Lucio Tagatac

"10PT Agenda"

Abrigo's poetics of space

By Gary C. Devilles
Contributor

PHILOSOPHER GASTON BACHELARD believes that the very spaces we inhabit and frequent are not just palpable expressions of our being but by themselves material for constituting ourselves. Whether this is just a corner in one house or the rooms where we usually promenade, these spaces, the paths and the intimate, the ordinary and the spectacular, shape our thoughts, build relationships, store memories and even provide dreams.

For Boni Abrigo, a graduating Fine Arts student from the University of the Philippines Diliman, spaces take on an enhanced significance, even more poetic, if only we can see with the soul of the eye.

In "Mock Untold," he depicts a subdivision space where normal organs such as the intestines and the heart are scattered, with beds like a maze and goods.

Only cabins in a backyard of colorful prefab products in an abattoir with an insignia of McDonald on its roof. The room paints a touching character in as far as fast food hastened the modern day of hamburger, widened the chasm between the rich and the poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity and propelled American cultural imperialism abroad.

Abrigo is being cynical in juxtaposing an idyllic landscape in the background with the daughter as the center, which presages reminds us of the battle space our new dwelling and the dreamscape that looms in the horizon.

Violence and commerce

Abrigo's social commentary of space takes on a philosophical level as he depicts Manila, Bonn, a military base now converted to a tourist destination, where all traces of violence seem effaced by the thriving commercial centers. Manila was founded as a colonial water stop, and grew quickly through the 1930s.

Manila Army Air Field was located east of the town during the war and teemed several thousand soldiers when shooting in 1945.

Dubai "Dungeon and Dragon's Pranks from Manila to Dystopia"—a fitting tribute to two installation artists, Michael Dungeon and Jesper Dragon—here is a hybrid creature of an ostrich with human legs walking to a Prada store. Like an ostrich that buries its head in the sand, we are oblivious to the dangers, consumers or tourists seem oblivious to the real factor for which the place were in fact a spectral residues.

Like Dungeon and Dragon whose works investigate mechanisms of ideological control in various spaces, Abrigo offers this work as a philosophical musing on the contradictions inherent in our society and the violence inflicted in the not-so-distant past.

The past for Abrigo is a wellspring not only of images of lost spaces but also of icons of time as the curse of the eternal return.

In "Screaming Teddy" and "Take Your Time," we see how the Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels and even Queen Elizabeth II owned the mediating spaces of a television room, whether this is a street, the bedroom or even the press.

Abrigo seems to be saying that, wherever we are, the world comes through and ends with our eyes open on our new home everything is connected. It is with such a critical eye that Abrigo seems to reorganize power structures and suddenly, big chairs of spaces, and that's why "Seasons of Transitions" seems to reinterpret Felix Lang's "Metropolis."

Abrigo is still too young in this industry, but his insights are to old so our collective memories and, just like his name, which means "free shelter" in Spanish, perhaps this artist is gesturing out to an escape from the numbing crowds or cruel world for us a homecoming, a real space called tomorrow in Tagalog, a place where we all stop crying as both he plant and the pain in tribute to suggest.

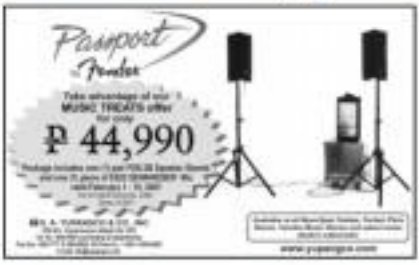
In Boni Abrigo's space we shall perhaps be comforted even only for awhile.

"Escape" is on view at Equitare, Salcedo, Port Bonifacio, Taguig, (2)(7)13960.

"SEASONS of Transitions"

"TAKE Your Time"

Mariano Ching prints at Serendra



"TRAVELING at Night"

MARIANO CHING IS A PAINTER, ILLUSTRATOR, photographer and printmaker. He graduated from the University of the Philippines with a degree in Fine Arts major in Painting. He is a member of the Surrounded by Water group, which runs the Surrounded by Water Galleries from the late '90s up to its closure around 2004.

Ching was also a Hiroshima monbusho scholar from 2002-2004. He studied printmaking, specializing in Japanese woodblock prints, at the Kyoto City University of Fine Arts. He has won the Philippine Board on Books for Young People prize twice: for his illustrations for the storybooks "Bakit Matapol ang Isaniko Ko" and "Mac Mags #Ang Pate."

His works have been exhibited in the Philippines, Penang, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the United States, and belong to prestigious art collections including that of the Singapore Art Museum.

Ching recently received the Cultural Center of the Philippines Thirteen Artists Award.

His exhibition limited-edition prints are on view at Ayala Gallery, Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. The exhibit is in cooperation with CPCP Gallery. Call 9921111.

"Ekek Man"

2006 AAP . . .

From page D3

dia" with its cornucopia of artistic tools and appurtenances lovingly rendered in detail. Third was Neal Agnes's "Resilience," a raging storm of fluxus spikes in various activities, with colorful decorative motifs surrounding the composition.

Honorable mention winners: Mikhael Castañeda's "Rebirth"; Carlos Hilarri "Manifest"; Atlas Dennis Barrogo's "All Over"; Ms. Tassios Doctor's "Anatomy"; and Jennifer Bautista Montenegro's "In Bottle."

Photography had only a few entries, but Ronald Limpoy's "Tanging Yaman" was a clear standout, with an image of a young girl doing her schoolwork on makeshift bed instead of a table, surrounded by household clutter.

Toni Peñano's "Mall Culture," a satirical look at mall rats, was second, while Lallaine Bautista "In the Heart of the Image" came in third.

Two honorable mention citations went to Noel Pimentel "Tire Way Juan Stop" and Paolito Jose Ai's "Juan Pusoy."

RONALD Limpoy's "Tanging Yaman."

The AAP Annual in December served as the grand climax to a long year devoted to competitions, hosted by the AAP under its president, Fidel Sumiguin.

The other contests: On-the-Spot Art Painting; Art Time; Our Time on-the-spot painting competition for a major newspaper; Nature in Abstraction; AAP-Ecta Semi-Annual Competition; and 100 Years Filipino Legacy in Female Mural Painting Competition.

AAP also took part in exhibits here and abroad. It also sponsored projects, "Lakbay Sining — sky friday" in Tobias, Batangas; the Pengpean State University; and the Gawad Kalinga housing project in Lipa Batangas.

It also organized Sagip Kilo for Basics, with Pilcro Philippines.

It was, in the final reckoning, a memorable, though critical, year for art. The Year of the Pig will be worth celebrating, in grand fashion, with the AAP finally becoming a senior citizen.

May the AAP have a truly fulfilling 60th year!

E-mail author at gdemonteverde@yahoo.com

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bernie G. Velarde

One year after the stampede

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

Willie Revillame says he went to the morgues so he could apologize to all 71 who died

IN WILLIE REVILLAME'S dressing room in the ABS-CBN studios is a big bronze sofa that also serves as a bed.

The "Wowowee" host jokes that he practically lives in the studio, 24/7.

You get the feeling he's serious.

He admits that he stayed in the dressing room for weeks after a very public breakup with his wife, model Liza Soberano.

Although his first show found a home in the canteens of Quezon City, he still speaks a lot of fans here.

"I hung around [the studio] after the show, just in case I need to meet with the staff," he says.

Quite tellingly, the newsweek didn't choose to celebrate the noontime game show's second anniversary yesterday, as it coincided with the first anniversary of the tragedy at the Philippine Arena (formerly Ilisan, in Paraj City), which killed 71 audience members in a stampede.

Willie says he didn't make plans himself.

"But we had a Mass with the newsweek's Big Boss [Gabby Lopez and Charo Santos, among others], and some of the families [of the victims] invited us earlier today [on Feb. 21]," he explains.

He decided not to attend the Mass, though. "I was afraid I'd get too emotional. Ever[ybody] says I [sure] [I will cause] that inside me."

Even so, he later insists that he has recovered from what he once described as a "nightmarish" ordeal.

His memories he treasures from the tragedy: "I went to the morgues [in the stampede aftermath]. I wasn't afraid. I said sorry to each corpse, all 71 of them. Siyang [sic] humiliga po ako ng pamamasiko ng tuwid. Hindi po siyempre gusto ang nangyari. [Mother, Father, I seek your forgiveness. He didn't want any of this to happen.] He continues that I did. He's because no one else was allowed [to go into the morgue. I actually talked with the dead."

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

He also recounts that, in the rescue scenes, he felt thoroughly conflicted whenever the families asked him to pose for snapshots beside the coffins.

"I remember asking myself: Why did we have to create this way? But I can never forget the daughter of one of the victims. She told me that her mother had a premium before going to the Ilisan. She said her mom had wanted to look her best, to one she got to meet me. So that if the pic came out good, her mother would be soft and heaven's kid. That was because her mom was a beauty woman."

Willie says that it is the emotional scenes that now are his to relive.

He asserts, "I'm okay now. After the stampede, so many things have happened. So many trials and tests in my personal life and in my career. Yeah, [even about] the show. My family."

He sighs. "But that's life. What is important is to learn from [but not forever] the past [and move on]. We should make all the mistakes we can just for 'Wowowee,' not just for ABS-CBN. It's for all the producers of shows [and others] big rewards. It's a reminder for everyone in the industry. We should realize the people who watch our shows and do everything to ensure their safety."

Bakekang not sitting pretty

By Nini Valera

It's hard work for Sunshine Dizon, and she's glad viewers appreciate her efforts

THE ACTRESS in her "most challenging role"

KAMIKAZE CITY—The scene: a disaster at sea. A lost dolphin and Bakekang and her two daughters, Crystal and Cherrie-ng, are among the passengers. Who will Bakekang save?

"We don't know what will happen next," says Sunshine Dizon, 22, who plays the title role in the GMA prime time soap, "Bakekang."

"Knowing the character of Bakekang, she will probably save Crystal, her super It's Crystal who makes the money," offers Sunshine Barth, who plays the ugly Charming to Lovi Poe's pretty Crystal. "Bakekang is a mahilig [sic], and it's natural to have to follow her instincts."

Long wait

Taping the episode is an hiyaan for the three stars. They have been on the set since 6 a.m. Friday and 12 hours later, the scene has yet to be shot.

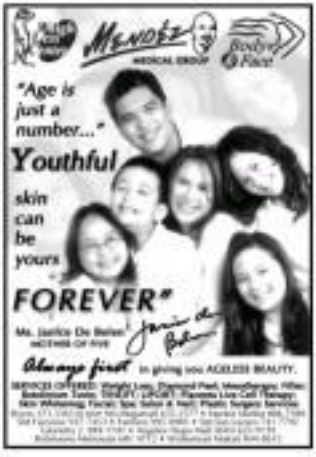
But no one is complaining.

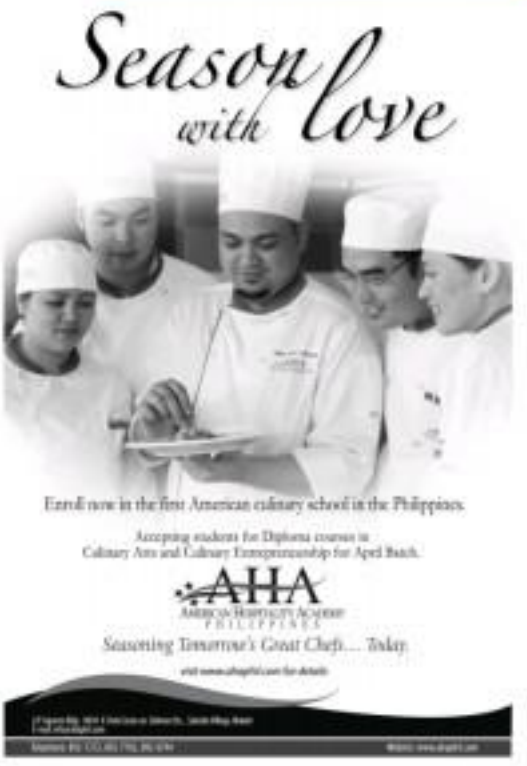
"Thirty-four all my life never a break," says Heath, who was born in Batanes and lived there until she was 8. "So I'm looking forward to [being] on the water."

For, who says she loves her role, is most subdued.

"I will get busy with my next record album when [the is

BAKEKANG 31





GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

A. LIPIN — By Edi Abiera

BABY BLUES — By Jerry Scott

PUGAD BABOY — By Pol Jamero

NUTS — By Patrick McDonnell

LOVEBOTS — By Elizabeth Chionglo

ATOMO AND WEBBY — By Lyn Garcellano

DIVINE COMEDY — By Steven Pahilagao

BIRD MACHINE — By Nikki Abiera

HIKBOKONGS — By Jomike Tejido

TULOOK — By Pahlang Tatum Hilahilang

BEN — By Daniel Shelton

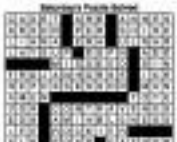
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1. Sanitary agent (if misquoted)
5. Singapore
9. Driving to distance
14. Highway hazard
15. Disaster zone
16. Stand-in, pawn
17. Martina Hingis's transition
19. Processing rate
20. Alphabet
21. Honeymooner
22. Wish-bearer
23. Hurry ahead
24. Developing
25. Hic Haec
26. Supermodel Carol
28. Breakfast time
29. Cost-catcher
31. Centavo
32. Pronoun
33. Atheist result
40. Thought after that
41. Mentor figures
42. Way to have
43. Bank feature
44. Indicator
45. ... and towards
46. Profoundly
48. Enjoy or blame
50. Cost coverage
51. ... or shore
52. Seeming motive
53. Picture of a poker
54. Blunt
55. Ambulance's sight
56. Nimbi's neighbor
58. ... it
61. Conscious selves
64. People with cyclic
65. Win a poker
66. Cozy
67. Noticeably
68. Weekend tasks

DOWN
1. Instrument
2. Wrestler's cost
3. Like mossed
4. Electric shock
5. Cleaning utensils
6. Creative block
7. Society (Jones's)
8. Air cost
9. Unleaded
10. Disc jockey's compliment
11. Cushioning store
12. Mill machine
13. Subtle color
14. Impersonate
15. Check often
17. Equal exchange
18. Nitric's main
20. Very out
21. Health's solution
22. Who dwell not?
23. Told a whopper
24. Mixed-singing tool
26. Smashing
27. Comedy genre
28. Insect bite
30. Water
31. Fork-like
34. Before
35. School break
37. ... not (declined)
38. Tortoise-like
40. Bonfire
41. Mixer frame
44. Follow as a result
47. Pitch
49. Tape gun
50. Lucid (document)
52. Bath and Eve, for example
53. U.S. Zoo pillowcase
57. Pitch
59. Tape gun

By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD

Tomorrow's Puzzle Solved



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HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21 to April 20). Financial matters are favorable today, but you might be inclined to take a risk. Don't do it. Libra finds you irresistible today, but you are overloaded and have no time for romance. Be patient. Tomorrow is another story. Guillermo de Jesus's poem "Love," written by Ms. Hachey, echoes:

TAURUS (April 21 to May 20). Pause and wait for the right answer to come with subtle alterations. Be flexible. Invest in cool, romantic garments should be easy-pickin's this week when this is what gets you noticed. Don't be tempted to spend your money.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20). Avoid arguments with your boss. Be extra nice with family members in particular. Happy birthday to Gemini Jose Rizal. Stay cool to make your efforts to impress them. Berkeley likes this.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22). Don't push your luck today. Be careful when you're driving. Hit-and-run accidents are common. Stay home. Don't take this personally, it could save your life. Also avoid arguments with family members.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22). You can be so sensitive at times. Don't let other people's criticisms get you down. Don't be too impressed about the opinions of others. Relax.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22). You have sudden urges and impulses today that seem to prove you're psychic. Don't trust your feelings blindly. They have less power over you if you don't take them from them.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22). It's a challenging day to make decisions. You're not able to go solely by your gut. Don't let others tell you what you really want. This is no contest. They're there when you want them. But you know what to do.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21). Be careful not to get involved in some guilt-ridden/crime-related/dirty business. Keep your hands clean. Even though you're exhausted, try to get your work organized and take the time to rest.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21). Don't get involved in "deals" with others and people. Don't be fooled by "deals" you're involved in. Don't let others tell you something. Don't believe it.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19). Avoid arguments and political discussions today. People have strong urges to control and influence others. Don't let them. You can express the Spanish inquisition.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18). You're in your element today. Don't let others tell you what to do. Be extra careful with your money. Don't lend out to whatever they have. It's bad business all day.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20). Conversations, arguments and disagreements today could be unusually intense today. Stay cool. Don't let others get you down. Don't take criticisms personally. This is not a good day for the rest of Bing because he's not very emotionally stable.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

			9				6	5
		9		8	3			2
	8				4	9		
9				3		4	8	
	4		1		7		3	
	1	6		5				7
		1	3				2	
8			6	7		3		
7	5				9			

Difficulty Level ★

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

4	9	3	7	6	5	2	1	8
7	8	2	3	1	9	4	5	6
5	6	1	4	8	2	3	9	7
2	3	5	6	7	4	1	8	9
8	1	4	9	5	3	7	6	2
9	7	6	8	2	1	5	3	4
3	2	8	1	4	6	9	7	5
1	5	6	2	9	7	8	4	3
6	4	7	5	3	8	6	2	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Bakekang not . . .

Front page

ones," she told us.

Dawn, for her part, finds it "very flattering" that people already call her "Bakekang" in public.

"The scenes I have effected them, and that I have been effective in playing the role," she notes, describing her role as the most challenging to-date.

"This only 22, and the role is too mature for me. She's a mother and I have never been a mother. So I guess, I have given the role justice, that I have become Bakekang."

But there's a downside to being popular.

Network rivalry

In a recent live performance in Iloilo City, Dawn recalls, she was upset over the "shabby treatment" she got from the food personnel.

"The live networks previously had an agreement that we would get half of the one-hour show, and they would get the other half," she relates to buttress his sentiment. "They were in a hurry to get their show done because they had a plane to catch so we told them to go ahead, but they refused. So I took my turn and sang. I was supposed to sing two numbers. After one song, I was already swarmed by the boss, announcer from GMA 7's local station. Hearing the statement, her microphone was on. The videos from the other network already wanted to go onstage. But we weren't done yet."

She continues, "I was about to sing my next song when the host of the other network asked the audience if they liked the show being aired on their network. I felt that was rude. I was still onstage. I never shied and sang my song. I missed from the crowd's reaction that something else was going on. Then I realized that the next singer from the other network had already entered to perform. But Until finished my song, and the host from the other network thanked me. That was the first time the host acknowledged my presence on stage."

Slighted

Dawn admits she was slighted.

"We just don't do that to a colleague," she says. "There's such a thing as etiquette in show biz. I heard that (the other singer had apologized), but he said he was sorry if someone was offended and that he was only doing his job. I know about doing a job, but it doesn't mean that you have to be rude in doing it."

The talent from MEG-ON was Mary Bonna, one of the stars of Joel-ivers "Pedro Penduko."

Like Dawn, Bonna has appeared on national TV to explain his side.

But Dawn stresses that no ill-intentions the encounter (but she got from Bonna.

"I know he's just new in the business and thus his handlers

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GALLERIA

1 CIUDAD VI – THX
2 APOCALYPTO
3 BABEL
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
5 CHARLOTTE's WEB
6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
7 BABEL
8 LITTLE CHILDREN
9 SAW 3
10 AGENT X44

ERMITA

1 APOCALYPTO
2 BABEL
SAW 3
3 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
4 LITTLE CHILDREN
5 AGENT X44
6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
7 CHARLOTTE's WEB

METRO EAST

1 ROBIN-HOOD
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
3 APOCALYPTO
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
5 SAW 3
6 LITTLE CHILDREN
7 CHARLOTTE's WEB
8 AGENT X44

NOVALICHES

1 APOCALYPTO
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
3 CHARLOTTE's WEB
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE

PIONEER

1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
2 APOCALYPTO
3 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE

NOW SHOWING

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STA. ROSA

1 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
2 FRAGILE
3 AGENT X44
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

LIPA

1 DECK THE HALLS
2 AGENT X44
3 LITTLE CHILDREN
4 FRAGILE

DASMARINAS

1 ARTHUR and the INVISIBLES
2 APOCALYPTO
3 AGENT X44
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

ANGELES

1 APOCALYPTO
2 AGENT X44
3 DECK THE HALLS
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

IMUS

1 APOCALYPTO
2 SHAGUN vs. EVIL DEAD 2
3 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44

STARMILLS

1 DECK THE HALLS
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 AGENT X44
4 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
5 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
6 APOCALYPTO

BACOLOD

1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 A GOOD YEAR
5 AGENT X44
6 FEAST

ILOILO

1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 AGENT X44
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
5 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
6 ROBIN-HOOD

COMPOUND

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SHOWTIME

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SHOWTIME

MAXI EDA

MYMP in Love

Pop Suzara

Bakekang not sitting pretty

From page E3

should have advised him," she says. "But some things couldn't be taught—some things like ethics and being polite."

Mavith's after the interview. Diana is set to take a plunge to shoot the next scene.

Even if she has a body double, the actress says she is prepared to step in on the cold water.

Just another day in the life of Bakekang.

BEHIND THE SCENES. Sunshine Dizon (center) with Lani Pen (left) and Yasmien Kurdi

THE POLES bear no 'Animal Planet'

ENTERTAINMENT

Up close & dangerous

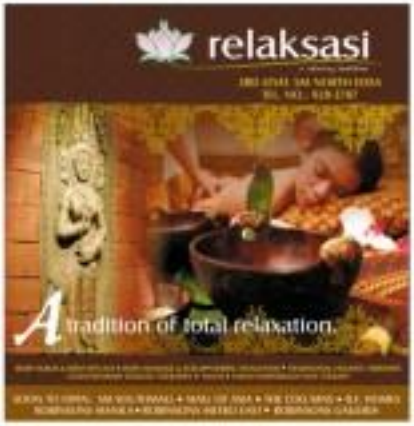
AN ANIMAL IN THE WILD, POWERful and agitated, gets a little too close to the lens or camera-man—such an unforgettable encounter is sure to grip viewers' attention.

Animal Planet's new series, "Up Close and Dangerous," sends viewers on an exhilarating ordeal with some of the world's most acclaimed wildlife filmmakers whose encounters with their subjects change from breathtaking to alarming in an instant.

The wildlife filmmakers tell their stories and share harrowing footage of charging elephants, shark attacks, close encounters with snakes, lions and tigers.

On premiere night, Feb. 12, focus is on the African elephant, polar bear and buffalo. The gripping images of the African elephant nearly cost camera expert Peter Coleman his life. In the Canadian Arctic, one of the bears attacks filmmaker Ashish Kapadia's lunch guide. And again in Africa, Sophie Darlington, while filming lions, offends a buffalo.

Episodes encore every Sunday at noon.



Appeal of love

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

Appeal of love

MOVIE PRODUCERS KNOW SOME-thing we ordinary mortals don't. Ever since the very early years of filmmaking, love and romance have been major staples in the movies, and their appeal remains strong to this day.

Maybe it's all silly, palpitating flash and thrill—or not. Maybe the attraction still shallows after all, for psychologically plugs into some basic and very primal forces that have driven mankind since the dawn of time.

Like, the need for love to focus but into the driving force that assures continued procreation in the unimaginable instead of a handy, which is needed for the survival of the species?

In any case, the love-but team-up in films has been forward even more productively by another modern—the movie love theme, which producers have serially curated to increase the profitability of romance in the movies.

In other words, if one actor and actress couples the "chemistry" to make a romantic film a hit, their "dream team" can be used to movie after movie, to keep the profits coming!

Thus, very early on, the movie world developed its Katharine Hepburn-Spencer Tracy and Ingrid-dela Rosa-Carmen Rendon tandems, whose joint movies made money for decades to end.

Later, in Filipino movies, the Vilma-Lolo, Nida-Nestor, Nora-Dyan, Vilma-Edgar, Smoky-Albert, Marisol-Williams and Julius-Marvin tandems all

teams remains strong to this day

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

...ment their musical producers laughing merrily-o-the-bank.

Their thoughts come to mind, because love teams have once again become popular and profitable of late. Some hit movies have been energized by their stellar love tandems...Regine Velasquez and Robin Padilla, Sitti Gomez and Sam Milby, Aljur Abrenica and Angel Locsin, and soon-to-be-wed Kristine Hermosa and Bryan Agoncillo in "Kasal, Kanak, Kanda."

The romantic formula may be as old as the movies itself, but new love teams tender it fresh and ever "new."

Much of it is on Basics, but there are many viewers who these relevant only too willing to be entertained, silly and romantically deceived!

"Inclination with consent" is very much a part of the audience's covenant between viewers and filmmakers, and it all makes a very kind of sense.

Because, if you think about it, seduction, procreation and propagation of the species do go together like a horse and carriage, or like love and marriage...and...matrimony!

What is it about today's hit love teams that accounts for their appeal to movie fans? Regine Velasquez probably go the best team route. Sam Bate are love-lukky but similarly combative, Angel-Richard are more traditionally, morally-loving-viewers, the more traditional-romance of Gloria Lulu.

As for Ashley-Ryan, the success of their first romantic starrer together is regarded as a big deal in film circles, because there is the only "star as well as stuff" love tandem. So, the fact that "Kasal" hit is big means that the public "approves" of their real life relationship.

This is deemed crucial because, even after they get married, viewers would still feel like "cupped ing" their follow-up starrers with their wild passion-ups.

It is not wonder, then, that the sequel of "Kasal" is already on the drawing boards! Reportedly entitled "Saked, Sakali, Sakdal," it could click with viewers even if its stars get hitched in real life in the interim!

DID YOU KNOW...

LONDON—British book retailer Waterstone's is hoping to set up a help line for distressed fans of the popular Harry Potter series because two-thousand will be killed off in the final instalment. The Daily Telegraph reported over the weekend. The seventh and final edition of British author J.K. Rowling's hit series—"Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows"—becomes available in July. AFP

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Fallen beauty hints at childhood abuse

NEW YORK—FALLEN BEAUTY queen, Miss USA Tara Conner, said she had witnessed abuse as a child and that may have driven her into a life of alcohol and drugs—but that she still believed she could be a good role model.

Conner, 22, came close to losing her crown last month because of bad behavior but was given a second chance by real estate tycoon and reality TV star, Donald Trump, owner of the Miss USA contest, after she agreed to enter a rehabilitation program.

RUSHES

In her first interview since emerging from a month in rehab, Conner said her problems may have stemmed from some unspecified abuse during her childhood with someone she recently confronted. She would not comment on whether the abuse was sexual. "It's something I would like to speak with my family about first," she told NBC television's "Today" show in the interview broadcast on Thursday. Reuters

TARA CONNER

Ang Lee gives back

HONG KONG—Oscar-winning director Ang Lee grew up in Taiwan and started his career there before moving on to Hollywood. Now he wants to give back to the tiny island's movie industry.

Lee and younger brother and fellow filmmaker Lee Kang-Sheng launched a program to cultivate Taiwanese directors by funding workshops and providing help in marketing, the brother Lee Kang told The Associated Press Friday in a phone interview.

"We'll produce for the directors ... so they focus on being directors. We'll plan their marketing for them," the younger Lee said. So sites said he wants to train directors to making commercial movies and escape Taiwan's preference for art house cinema.

ANG LEE

He said ding Lee ("Wakefield Mountain," "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon") will serve as an artistic consultant, focusing on developing the scripts of the students.

AP

Sienna, rest Mary!

NEW YORK—After being hounded by tabloids about her private life, reportedly her relationship with ex-fiancé Jude Law, Sienna Miller wants the focus to be on her acting and forthcoming roles.

The New York-born 25-year-old English actress has her biggest role yet in the film biography "Factory Girl," which is being released in the United States this week.

She plays the 60s-era pop artist Andy Warhol's short-term muse Edie Sedgwick, who grabbed attention in the 1960s dressing as an impoverished fashion style while hanging out in the arms of a celebrity.

"It would be nice if the focus was on something other than my personal life," she hissed hotmail, 'Cheesed Miller told Reuters.

"Factory Girl" director George Hickenlooper said the film had trouble getting financed, in part due to Miller's widespread appeal. She had made only three previous films. Hickenlooper said at a news conference, "We were all passionate about having Sienna but she is just [Mary] Sienna." Reuters

SIENNA MILLER

More than hip-hop

ATLANTA—Grammy winners including Jazzdeck and Eric Benet told infantry high school students that the music industry has plenty of different jobs to offer.

During a discussion on Wednesday at the Clark Atlanta University's Bob Elliott Music & Art Complex, the artists advised about 300 teenagers to find their niche and chase the world their own talent.

"Still education is the most important thing to have," Lodeiro said. "I know you can have mixed careers. But if you combine that with hook smarts, you'll be unstoppable." AP

Daughtry doing fine

NEW YORK—Chris Daughtry watches people around forget his shocking elimination from last year's "American Idol." "It's kind of a touchy subject.

"You hear one of two things: 'You were robbed' or 'You shouldn't be here,'" he says about television from sympathetic fans (Taylor Hicks took home the title).

CHRIS DAUGHTRY

"I hate hearing it," he says. "It makes you feel like they've made in their memory from when you were on the show. You want them to kinda break out of that and hear you where you're at now and see that things are fantastic and there's nothing to be upset about. Get over it, you know, because I'm doing all right." AP